AT THE FOOT of THE RAINBOW

JAMES B. HENDRYX

Lynn T Pier
Mar 17/31

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

By JAMES B. HENDRYX

AUTHOR OF

"The Promise," "North," "The Gold Girl,"
"Prairie Flowers," "The Gun Brand,"
"The Texan," "Snowdrift," etc.

A. L. BURT COMPANY

Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with G. P. Putnam's Sons

Printed in U. S. A.

Copyright, 1923, 1924
by
Doubleday, Page & Co.

Copyright, 1924
by
James B. Hendryx

By James B. Hendryx

Connie Morgan in Alaska
Connie Morgan with the Mounted
Connie Morgan in the Lumber Camps
Connie Morgan in the Fur Country
Connie Morgan in the Cattle Country
Connie Morgan with the Forest Rangers

The Promise
The Gun Brand
The Texan
The Gold Girl
Prairie Flowers
Snowdrift
Without Gloves
At the Foot of the Rainbow
North
Oak and Iron

This edition is issued under arrangement with the publishers,
G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Co-Partnership	3
II.	On Bear Lake	14
III.	Nixon Applies for a Job	28
IV.	The Good Man	42
V.	Gus Janier	51
VI.	Birds of a Feather	67
VII.	A Little Square of White	88
VIII.	An Island Camp	102
IX.	A Million!	116
X.	At the Mouth of the Icy	127
XI.	Babcock Stays in Camp	140
XII.	An Assault and Battery	158
XIII.	Beside the Little Fire	171
XIV.	Boyne's Camp	185

CHAPTER PAGE

XV.—Crowley Makes an Arrest . . 198

XVI.—Nixon Returns 210

XVII.—Janier Breaks the News . . 223

XVIII.—On Sussex Lake 234

XIX.—The Start 246

XX.—Corporal Downey Gets a Transfer 257

XXI.—On the Trail 270

XXII.—The Passing of Constable Crowley 283

XXIII.—The Investigation—Babcock . 301

XXIV.—The Investigation—Nixon . . 318

XXV.—At the End of the Rainbow . 329

At the Foot of the Rainbow

At the Foot of the Rainbow

CHAPTER I

A CO-PARTNERSHIP

"PUT 'em up!" The face of Amos Nixon, red with the exertion of lifting the four little kegs from the dark recess beneath the broken roof of the old igloo gradually assumed a greyish pallor, as he stared into the muzzle of the service revolver held in the hand of Constable Crowley, of the Mounted. Slowly, shakily, he elevated his hands above his head and rose from his knees beside the aperture. He spoke no word as the officer advanced and lifted the six-gun from beneath the out-bulged front of his shirt. There was no need for words. The facts spoke for themselves.

"You can put 'em down, now," said Crowley, with an appraising glance at the kegs. "Sixty gallon, eh?"

"Lackin' ten," answered the other in a flat,

toneless voice, "I draw'd off about ten gallon out of the kag that's tapped."

Stooping, the officer ended up the indicated cask, in the head of which a wooden plug had been driven into a boring. The faded blue eyes of the hooch-runner watched indifferently as Crowley placed his nose to the plug and sniffed at its contents. Then, suddenly, a flicker of hope glinted for a fleeting instant in the faded eyes. It was a little thing that had roused Nixon from the depths of despair into which his unexpected arrest had thrown him—a thing so insignificant that the eyes of most men would have given it no heed. Merely, that as Crowley had inhaled the odor of the liquor, he had unconsciously wetted his lips with his tongue.

"Might's well eat, hadn't we, before we pull out?" asked Nixon. "You'll be takin' me to Baker Lake, I s'pose."

The officer nodded, "Yes, Baker Lake," he answered, and: "I guess we might's well eat."

Nixon started toward his canoe which was drawn up on the bank of the river a few feet distant.

"Hold on!" The voice of Crowley halted him, and he turned. "Grub's in my pack, here. Government's goin' to feed you fer quite a spell,

might's well begin now. Besides, you might make a mistake an' grab up a rifle instead of a fryin' pan out of yer canoe."

A grin twisted the lips behind the scraggly beard as the man wagged a negative: "No, nothin' like that. But you dig out the stuff while I make a fire." A few minutes later, with the bacon sizzling in the pan, and the teapot snuggled against the little flames, Nixon extended a hand upon which the fingers twitched, nervously: "Say, Constable, this here—it's kind of throw'd me off. I didn't figger none of the Mounted would be down here. I—I kind of got the shakes. Never had 'em yerself, I s'pose. But, they're hell. I was thinkin', mebbe, if you'd kind of look the other way fer a minute, I'd knock out the plug an' draw me off a shot. God knows I need it."

Crowley nodded: "Go ahead. I guess they'll be plenty left fer evidence."

Nixon loosened the plug with a billet of wood, and tilting the keg, allowed the liquor to splash into the tin cup which he held in his hand. Out of the tail of his eye he watched the face of Crowley, and again he noted that as the fumes of the liquor were borne to the man's nostrils, he passed his tongue across his lips. With the cup three-quarters full, he returned to the fire and seated himself

beside the officer: "Fetched this in clean from The Pas," he vouchsafed, "An' every mile I come, the safer I felt. After I'd got past Du Brochet I figgered I was all right. I *cached* the stuff here three months ago. Wisht I'd of tuk it on, then. But I run short of grub an' tuk a run up to the coast, an when I gits back I rolls out the kags an' finds myself lookin' down a gun-bar'l from the wrong end. Not that I'm holdin' it agin you. 'Taint your fault. I'd ruther be in my shoes right now than yourn. Yous boys has got a hell of a job. Stuck off up here in this God-forsooken country, an nothin' to do but hike an' paddle, an' paddle an' hike, winter an' summer. No fun, an' damn little pay—an' who gits the credit? Not yous boys that does the work. You git yer orders, an' you hit out. If you do what yer sent to do, that's all right—the Inspector gits the credit, an' what do you git? You git some more orders, to go to hell an' gone somewheres else, or mebbe it's paint buildin's, er play nurse to a lot of stinkin' natives. An', if you don't do what yer sent out to do, you git bawled out.

"Take me, now. I'll pay my fine fer this job—er mebbe do a little time, an' the slate's clean. An', the next batch I run in pays back the fine, an' a damn good stake to spare. If I do time, I git

damn good wages fer settin' around the jail an' lettin' the Gov'ment pay my board an' lodgin'. One batch a year's a good livin'. Two batches, an' I'm ridin' high. An' the rest of the time I can spend where I damn please. They hain't no one tells me where to head in at. But, here I be shootin' off my face, an' grub's ready. Say," he exclaimed, extending the liquor to the officer, "How about you jinin' me in a little shot? It's on me. Here, take this, an' I'll draw me off another one."

Crowley's hand reached for the cup, then stopped: "Hell, I ain't supposed——"

"Hain't supposed to take a little drink! Don't I know that? Who'll ever find it out? Even if I was to squeal to the Inspector, would he b'lieve me, agin your word? I'll say he wouldn't! Go ahead, it won't hurt you none. Damn if I'd let any Gov'ment tell me I couldn't take a little snort now an' then! You work hard, an' up here you don't git a chanct to take a little drink every day."

"Guess it wouldn't hurt nothin', at that," answered Crowley, taking the cup. Nixon noted that the eyes of the other brightened as the strong liquor took hold. He sipped at his own drink, and took care that the conversation did not lag:

"Yessir, I've always got enough on me to pay

my fine in cash money. I figger this here job'll cost me about five hundred—an' as soon as the jedge mentions it, it's his'n, an' I'm off. Well, I'll be damned! If that there bacon hain't shrunk up an' burnt to a cinder—an' us settin' here shootin' off our face."

"Throw it out an' cut some more," advised Crowley, as he drained his cup.

Nixon complied, and picking up the two empty cups walked over and refilled them at the keg: "One drink hain't worth a damn, nohow. This here hain't stout enough to hurt us none, an' we might's well be killin' time till that bacon frys."

Crowley accepted the cup without protest, his gaze resting on the kegs. "How much do you make on a batch like that?" he asked presently.

"Well, that's accordin'," answered the other. "It stands me five dollars a gallon at The Pas jest like it is. 'Course when I peddle it out I thin it down about half, an' I git anywheres from five to twenty-five a quart fer it in fur. Accordin' to who gits it, an' how much fur they got to pay fer it."

"Gosh A'mighty!" exclaimed Crowley, "I'll say there's a profit in it!"

"Sure they is. If they wasn't, you wouldn't see Amos Nixon into it. 'Course, there's the resk.

But I hain't only be'n picked up three times in goin' on twenty-five years, countin' today."

"My time's up in a little over a year," announced the officer.

"An' I s'pose you'll jine on agin' fer another five years."

"Well, I might. An' then agin', I mightn't." He sipped at his liquor and watched Nixon who had drawn from his pocket a fat roll of bills, and was engaged in counting them. Crowley saw that the bills were of large denomination. Before returning them to his pocket, the man separated them into two rolls. He looked up, apparently for the first time realizing that the officer's eyes were upon him.

"Jest kind of figgerin' how much I'd have left after I'd got my fine paid," he grinned. "You say you hain't a-goin' to jine up agin'?"

"I said maybe I would, an' maybe I wouldn't."

"Accordin' if you could find somethin' to do, that was a lot easier an' had some real money into it, eh?"

"Well, they ain't no reason I should stay in the Service if I seen where I could do better somewheres else."

"That's sensible," agreed Nixon, "That's jest what I was thinkin'. Bacon's ready—drink up."

The two drained their cups, and Nixon divided the bacon, and refilled the cups with tea. "Yup," he repeated, "I was thinkin' jest that same thing. Now, you listen to me a minute. I hain't offerin' no bribe, nor nothin' like that. Mebbe, I hain't even talkin' about you an' me. But, we'll say it's a case like this: There's a feller with twenty-five years experience in the country that gits nabbed by a Constable of the Mounted. He's got around fifty gallon in his batch. This here Constable takes him in, and it costs the trader five hundred dollars fine, which he pays it, an' gits back to work. It hain't but a little while till he's back with another batch, an' this time he don't git caught. He gits red of it, an' is on easy street. The Constable, what does he git? He gits his wages, which they don't run no more in a year's time than the trader paid fer his fine. But, he'd of draw'd his wages anyhow, whether he fetched in the trader or not. He could fix up his report to show why he didn't bring him in. Or, if he jest happen to run onto him, he don't say nothin' about it in the report. In such a case what does the trader do? He jest as soon pay the five hundred dollars to the Constable as to pay it to the jedge—an' a damn sight ruther. I'd sooner see you have it than the Gov'ment. But, they's

another reason. If the trader gits took in, he loses his batch of hooch, to boot. If he don't, he keeps the licker, an' the Constable keeps the five hundred. An' besides which, if this here Constable's time was soon out, the trader would give him a chanct to throw in with him—even pardners. Y'understan', I hain't offerin' you no bribe. This here's jest s'posin' they was a case like that."

Crowley nodded: "Sure, that's all right, Nixon. Maybe this Constable, he's agreeable to the proposition, an' he'd jest kind of reach out his hand, like I'm doin' now?"

"Then, the trader, he'd reach down an' dig up the five hundred, all counted out, an' he'd put it in the Constable's hand—like I'm doin' now." Crowley's fingers grasped the roll of bills, and he crowded them hastily into his pocket. Then, he rose to his feet, and began to make up his pack. "Where you headin' fer?" he asked, as Nixon watched him.

"Beverly Lake. There's a bunch of natives fishes up there every summer. Drift by that way when you git lonesome. We got to kind of keep a line on one another." As he talked, Nixon filled a flat flask, which he handed to the officer. "Here's a little nip on the trail," he said, "An', if you git around Beverly Lake, an' I hain't there, you'll

find the stuff *cached* in under a pile of bresh an' rocks, one hundred steps south, an' two hundred steps east of the door of that old log shanty on the south side of the lake, where them two points stick out. Couple of Huskys died in there onct an' the rest of 'em is afraid of the place."

"I know where it's at," said Crowley, "An now we're pardners, er will be, soon as I git my discharge I'll tell you somethin' fer yer own good. Do you know Gus Janier?"

"Sure, I know him, the son of a ——! Didn't he damn near kill me one time over on Slave Lake fer tradin' a bunch of Injuns out of their fur? An' not only that, he stoled the fur off'n me an' give 'em back to the Injuns! What'n hell was it any of his business, if the fools traded their fur fer hooch instead of grub? What's Gus Janier got to do with—this here?"

"Jest this much," answered Crowley. "It was him that tipped off this *cache* to the Inspector, an' he sent me down to investigate."

A tirade of abuse against the absent Janier greeted the announcement. "Him an' that damn big dog of his'n, rammin' around all over the country! You see him one time on the Mackenzie, an' next time, mebbe it's over on the Bay! He's always got good guns, an' outfit, an' he's always

puttin' a crimp in honest men that's tryin' to make a livin'!"

"Watch him, that's all," answered Crowley, as he returned the hooch-runner's revolver. "I'll jest report this *cache* moved before I got here."

CHAPTER II

ON BEAR LAKE

Coporal Downey, of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, carefully folded the letter and returned it to the girl that faced him across the little fire. Instead of meeting directly the dark eyes that regarded him steadily, the officer allowed his gaze to linger for a moment upon the three canoes drawn side by side upon the shingle, and then shift to the low-hung sun that showed fiery red across the windlashed waters of the lake. Teddy Bye and Bye, one of Irma Boyne's Indian guides, returned from the water's edge, and picking up a light axe, stalked silently into the woods. A moment later the pecking of the axe upon a dry spruce sounded above the muffled roar of the wind.

Finally, the officer spoke, his eyes upon the three Indians who lolled about a smudgy fire a short distance away. "I don't suppose anything I could say, Miss Boyne, would turn you back. I want to warn you, though, that you are right now headed into the bleakest an' least known

strip of country in Canada—maybe in the world. If there is any worse I don't want to see it. It's a mean country for a man to travel, an' no place at all for a woman."

The girl smiled, and for the dozenth time in the brief hour since he had met her, the officer found himself completely captivated by that smile: "But, I have been in the wilds before, Corporal Downey. With my father—fourteen months in the Andes, searching for the lost mines of the Incas, where we were the first white people many of the Indians had ever seen. And in Tibet we spent nearly two years trying to uncover the supposed sealed mines of C'hi Tzu. Why, I've been captured by Chinese pirates and held for three months before I was able to escape, and when I did, I had to find my way across more than a hundred miles of unknown country, before I found my father who, failing to get assistance from the proper authorities, had organized a sort of army of his own from among some wild tribesmen and was scouring the country to find me. Really, you don't need to feel any concern for my safety. I am not in the least afraid."

Downey returned the smile: "No, I know you ain't afraid. If you was afraid, I wouldn't have found you makin' yourself to home in a little

five-by-seven tent on the north shore of Great Bear Lake. It ain't a question of bein' afraid. It's a question of facts—a question of eatin', or not eatin! Game is scarce east of the Coppermine."

"I know, but we can live on fish if we have to. We have both hooks and nets, and the Indians are good fishermen. If I don't find my father before late fall, I'll work north to the coast and winter at Bernard Harbor, or if I get farther east, I can winter at Baker Lake, or at Fullerton."

Downey nodded: "Yes, you could winter at any of them places providin' you could get to 'em. Don't start too late, that's all. It's a big country up here, an' travelin's slow. You seem to know quite a lot about the country for one who's never be'n into it, an' maybe you'll make it all right. When you come to think about it there really ain't no reason why a woman couldn't live up here as handy as a man, only—we ain't used to 'em tryin' it.

"You say your father went in by way of Baker Lake, an' he was prospectin'?

"Yes," answered the girl, wearily, "A year ago this spring. He's trying to find the lost mines of the Indians—the gold and copper that lured old Captain Knight to his death in 1719. The mines that Hearn tried to find fifty years later."

"I've heard about that gold," said Downey, gloomily. "He ain't the first that's tried to find it. Why ain't folks satisfied to hunt new gold?"

The girl's eyes lighted: "But, he has found new gold—lots of it. He made his stake in the Klondike, in the days of the big stampede. Nobody can understand it unless they've felt it—the call of gold. When it comes men will leave home, friends, loved ones to answer the call. They will delve, and sweat, and starve, and freeze, and die for raw gold. But the call of a new strike, strong as it is, is nothing to the call of a lost mine. That is the call of calls! And in answering that call my father has traveled thousands of miles, and spent thousands of dollars. When my mother died he took me with him, to South America, and to China. When he returned from that trip, he swore he'd never take me again, so last year when he started into the North, he left me under the guardianship of a friend—that is, father thinks he's his friend—he trusts him implicitly, but——"

The girl's voice trailed off into silence.

"But, what?" asked Downey.

"Oh, I don't know—exactly," she answered evasively, "Only, sometimes I wonder if a man really knows his friends. I may be wronging Mr. Babcock, but—Anyway, I put in the time reading

everything I could get my hands on, about the North, and I've studied the maps. I think my father had bought everything that had ever been written on this country, not only books but the technical reports of Franklin, Rae, Richardson, Simpson, Hanberry, Dr. Bell, Stefansson—all of them."

"Maps ain't goin' to help you much where you're headin'," said the officer. "There ain't be'n any real explorin' done there yet, an' the maps is mostly wrong. But, why didn't you go in the same way he did?"

"There are two reasons. In the first place, I know from the marginal notes and notations on the books and reports that he intended to work westward, and I shall probably find him sooner from this side. Then, Mr. Babcock is going in from the east, and—well, the farther I am away from him, the better I'll like it."

The officer smiled: "You don't seem to think well of this Babcock. What's he huntin' your father for?"

"He *says* he's worried for fear something has happened to dad. Says it's his duty to start out and find him. You see, it's sixteen months since dad started, and thirteen since we have heard from him. The last letter was mailed at the head-

quarters of the Baker Lake Detachment of Police. Not only is Babcock my guardian, but he is to be the sole administrator of dad's estate under the terms of a will he drew just before he left. I think Babcock believes that my father is dead, and his object in going in search of him is to obtain proofs of death, so he can begin to take up his duties as administrator. I have heard it hinted that Babcock is rather heavily involved financially and if so, the handling of something like a million dollars would particularly appeal to him. Dad had hardly turned his back on civilization before Babcock tried to marry me. Smoothly and suavely, at first, with much talk of love—and failing in that, by threats." The girl paused and a faint smile curved her lips, "I don't think he'll try that game again, but—do you know, I hadn't even thought of worrying about father until I found out Babcock was going in search of him."

Downey nodded his understanding: "I'm sorry the country east of the Coppermine is outside my territory," he said, "I'd kind of like to keep my eye on how things goes. I'm doubtin' if there's any gold over there, but if there is, it's devil's gold—it's cost a lot of lives before, an' it'll cost more. But here I am, keepin' you up all night talkin'. You better turn in. You've got a hard

trail ahead, shovin' up Dease River. I just come down it, an' it's uncommon shallow for this time of year." The Indians were already asleep, lying rolled in their blankets nearby, and bidding the officer good night, the girl entered her tent.

After an early breakfast Downey and the girl watched the loading of her two canoes. "Good outfit you've got," approved the officer, "That's half the game—the other half's knowin' what to do with it. Live off the country an' save your grub. Most of 'em that comes into the North from the outside bring along a lot of fool notions about balanced rations an' scurvy. Besides bein' pure bunk it handicaps 'em with a lot of unnecessary outfit. Balanced rations might be all right down in the settlements where there's a doctor handy, but it ain't any good up here. Straight meat with plenty of fat—that's the secret—plenty of fat. Lean meat or fish straight will bring on starvation an' scurvy no matter how much of it you eat. Fat, that's all the balance you need along with your meat to keep healthy an' fit."

"I know," smiled the girl. "You don't notice any excess of dried or dessicated vegetables or fruit on my outfit, do you?"

"That's why I said it was a good outfit," grinned Downey, "An' remember this, after you hit the

Coppermine River, these Siwashes you've got are packers, not guides. Teddy Bye and Bye's a good man. The rest ain't much. They don't know nothin' about the country beyond, an' when you get ready to hit north for the coast next fall, use Eskimo instead of Injuns. They know more about the country than anyone else, an' you'll run onto some of 'em. They're supposed to fish in summer as far south as Back's River."

The loading was completed, and the girl's face lighted with a smile as she extended her hand to the officer: "Thank you for the advice," she said, "I'll follow it. I'll get along all right, I'm sure. It's just the kind of thing I love to do. I've never had the chance before. Dad's always been the commander of the outfit."

"No letters you want to send?" asked Downey. "It'll be your last chance for a long time."

"No letters," laughed the girl. "There's only dad and me. And when he connects with his mail there will be so many of my letters that it would be a shame to inflict another one on him. Good bye!"

"Good bye, and Good Luck!" called Downey, cheerily, as the canoes pushed off and headed eastward, skirting the shore.

For a long time the officer stood, his eyes on the receding canoes. When, finally, he turned and

with the precision of long practice, made up his own pack, the smile had faded from his face. From his pocket he produced note book and pencil, and for another long time he sat staring into the dying embers of the little breakfast fire. His unseeing eyes fixed the grey ashes, but his thoughts bridged the span of long years. He saw a Hudson's Bay Post, far to the southward, another face, "like hers" he whispered, and then—a rotting cabin, and a lonely grave beside the thundering waters of a nameless lake. The pencil dropped unheeded from his hands, and the fingers lifted and pushed slowly through the grizzled hair. "'Twas to answer the same wild call that Murdo MacFarlane took *her*," he murmured, "'Tis fool's gold—devil's gold—gold that costs lives!" A tiny flame flared for a moment among the ashes and died. Straightening himself with a jerk Coporal Downey recovered his pencil and made a notation in his notebook. Then, with water from the lake, he extinguished the last spark of smouldering embers, loaded his canoe, and pushing out into the lake, headed west.

At noon Irma Boyne's two canoes beached at the site of Old Fort Confidence, and while the Indians prepared the meal, the girl wandered about the grass-grown ruins of the building whose

four massive stone chimneys still stand as a gaunt and dismal monument to their builders. An incessant drizzle had set in, and in the mist-wraiths that rolled and whipped about the grim reminders of the past, she conjured stalking forms —Dease, Simpson, Richardson, Rae—intrepid explorers of eternal solitudes. The forms melted into the cold grey drizzle through which the spires of surrounding spruce trees blurred into dim background.

That night they camped comfortably in the last cabin they were to see in many a long day situated on a wooded point at the foot of the first rapids of Dease River.

To detail the ascent of Dease River would be to repeat with tiresome sameness a story of gruelling toil in the loading and unloading of canoes, portaging the outfit around swift, shallow rapids, and manhauling the canoes up through these rapids against the swift current of the river. Some sluggish, deep stretches there were which afforded welcome relaxation in the use of the paddle and pole, but for the most part the water of the river seemed to progress to its destination by a series of rushes over a shallow, boulder-strewn bed that all but furnished a complete bar to even shallow draught navigation.

On the evening of the sixth day they camped

at the mouth of a shallow creek that flowed into the Dease from the northwest. In the morning, when the Indians headed the canoes up this tiny stream, the girl called a halt. When after repeated questioning, Teddy Bye and Bye refused to be shaken in his statement that he knew the route to the Coppermine, and that this stream furnished the only means of reaching the Dismal Lakes portage, she reluctantly ordered them to proceed. There was little or no paddling now. The stream was ridiculously small to attempt with even the light canoes. The ascent became almost a continual portage. The bends were so sharp that the canoes could hardly be edged around them, and the rapids so shallow that the empty canoes scraped harshly upon the gravel bottom. It seemed incredible that such a small and insignificant watercourse could be a recognized route of travel, and several times the girl was upon the point of ordering a return to the main river. But always Teddy Bye and Bye insisted that he was on the right trail.

On the second, and third days, he pointed out old choppings, and in one place a small pile of firewood that had been left by some previous party. On the evening of the fourth day from the junction of the streams, they came upon the very

limit of navigation, in a valley flanked by rolling, gravelly hills. The girl's heart sank. It was as she had feared. The stream ended in the middle of a bleak wilderness—not a tree in sight, not even a shrub—only bare gravel, and rocks, and an occasional bunch of heather-like weed. She glanced at Teddy Bye and Bye, who smiled, and leaving the other Indians to set up the camp, motioned her to follow and led the way to a gravelly ridge, which they followed to its extremity, some two miles distant. The girl's heart leaped with new hope. Before her lay a narrow valley dotted throughout its length by a series of small lakes, while at its extremity, a long sheet of water was visible.

"The Dismal Lakes!" she cried, and the Indian nodded emphatically, and turning, led the way back to camp through a downpour of rain that had been threatening all the afternoon. And that night the girl retired in high spirits that even a wet and fireless camp could not dampen. The negotiation of the seven-mile portage consumed two whole days, and the traverse of the lakes two more, and on the morning of the fifth day from sighting the lakes, they slipped into the mouth of Kendall River for the short, dangerous dash to the Coppermine.

It was Irma Boyne's first descent of a swift-water river. The upper reaches were not so bad and the girl thrilled with a wild exhilaration as the canoe shot rapidly down stream borne on the swift current. Toward noon, however the exhilaration turned to apprehension as the frail craft hurtled past jagged boulders with the seeming speed of an express train, clearing sheer rock walls by a matter of inches, missing by hair's breadths, fang-capped rocks that reared their heads out of the foaming white-water, and dashing to apparent destruction in narrow, boulder-studded gorges. The wild rush shook her nerves, and time and again she would gladly have exchanged her situation for the disheartening toil of the up-stream portages.

From time to time she turned her head to glance into the immobile face of Teddy Bye and Bye who knelt in the stern of the canoe, wordless, expressionless, eyes to the front, his only sign of animation, the quick, sure twists of his trailing paddle.

Late in the afternoon the canoe plunged into a limestone canyon, by far the most turbulent and the swiftest of all the chutes of the Kendall. The river seemed to dash down a veritable hill so steep was its pitch. All about the canoe the water boiled and foamed and leaped high into the air

from some jagged obstruction that, had the canoe so much as touched, would have ripped through her bottom as a saw rips through a log. In white terror the girl gripped the thwarts and closed her eyes. Minutes passed as she waited in deadly calm for the crash that was sure to come. Beneath her the canoe leaped and bounded like a thing of life. In her ears the roar of the rapids blended into a mighty monotonous dirge. Subconsciously she knew that she was surprised at her own calm. It would soon be over—the crash and jar of impact, the chill of icy water, the short, frantic struggle with the whirling current, and . . . The roar of the rapids sounded from afar. The canoe floated steadily upon an even keel. It was with a distinct sense of effort that the girl opened her eyes. The bow man's paddle lay at rest across the thwarts before him. All about the canoe the water was placid as a mill pond. She turned her head to see Teddy Bye and Bye leisurely dip his paddle and with a graceful twist, head the canoe toward the low grassy shore. The other canoe shot from the mouth of the canyon and a moment later its bow gently scraped the gravel of the low, flat point that marks the junction of the Kendall with the Coppermine.

CHAPTER III

NIXON APPLIES FOR A JOB

CAMP was made in the sparse spruce growth, and after supper the girl questioned the Indians: "Have any of you ever been up the Coppermine from here?"

Teddy Bye and Bye, by far the most intelligent of the four, constituted himself spokesman. He was an exceptional Indian, in that he was honest. Not a product of the missions, he had lived the forty-odd years of his life on the Mackenzie and its tributaries. And with the exception of a few winters devoted to trapping, had lived in the constant service of the better element of white men. He had been in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, of the Northern Trading Company, and had worked under "Old Cap Shot" on the river. He had been mail carrier for thousands of miles of wilderness, and a special constable and guide for the Mounted. He had made two trips to the Arctic coast which had brought him into contact with several villages of Eskimo. He

understood English, and French, as well as the jargon, and a dozen or more Indian dialects. His speech was English interspersed with an occasional word of French or jargon.

Of the other Indians, two were hangers-on about the mission, and the other was a riverman who had deserted the brigade.

So, when the girl asked her question it was Teddy Bye and Bye who answered: "*Non.* Not have go oop de Coppermine. I'm mak' de trip wan tam' de way we com' an' down de Coppermine to de beeg wataire in de country of Innuit—w'at you call, Eskimo." At the words, Irma noticed that the other Indians shifted uneasily, and cast sidewise glances. Evidently they had no desire to come in contact with the Eskimo, who many of the Mackenzie River tribes hold in fear, despite the intermittent trade that exists between Eskimo and Indians to the northeast of Great Bear Lake. She hastened to put them at ease:

"We're not going into the Eskimo country. We turn south, here—up the Coppermine, through many lakes, across a portage, and onto a great river that flows to the eastward." The words produced no apparent effect on the three Indians who continued apparently ill at ease.

Suddenly all faces were turned toward the river.

Irma heard a soft, scraping sound and looked up to see an *umiak* beaching beside the canoes. Two men stepped out onto the gravel, a white man, and another evidently an Eskimo. This latter wore sealskin boots and clothing of caribou skin. He was bare headed and his black hair, cropped closely in front, hung straight about his neck and ears.

The white man advanced, the other following, and the girl noted with a smile that the three Indians huddled closer about the fire. She scrutinized the man who advanced to within two paces and halted abruptly with an exclamation of surprise:

"Well, I'll be—! Well, if it ain't a woman! Say, you're quite a ways from home ain't you?"

"Yes, quite," answered the girl, curtly. She did not like this man. There was something repulsive about him, although, if questioned at the moment, she would have been at a loss to tell what that "something" was. Certainly nothing distinctive or outstanding that would argue for either good or evil. He was of medium height and build. An untidy thatch of faded, straw-colored hair protruded from beneath the edges of a faded plush cap whose dilapidated visor hung limply against his forehead. Rather shifty eyes of pale,

watery blue looked out from above an unkempt, tow-colored beard, whose scraggly thinness disclosed a pair of thick, loose-hanging lips.

The man either did not notice, or chose to ignore the curtness of her reply. He squatted upon his heels and blinked his shifty eyes: "First woman I ever seen in these parts," he ventured, "except they was squaws or Husky *klooches*, an' they don't count. 'Course 'taint none of my business, but if it hain't no secret, I might ask where yer headin' fer?"

"It is no secret," answered the girl, "I am going up the Coppermine."

"Up it!" the man exclaimed, "Down it, you mean, don't you—to the coast?"

"No, if I had meant down I would have said down. I happen to be going *up* the river, away from the coast."

"Well, you've picked out a hell of a place to go to. An' you ain't got there yet, neither. You'll find out it's tracklinin' most of the ways an' some long portages around rapids, to boot. What's the idee of goin' up the Coppermine? They ain't nothin' up there when you git there—nothin' but muskeg an' black flies, an' skeeters, an' gravel, an' rocks, an' scrub timber."

"You have been up there?" asked the girl, quickly, "Recently? Within a year?"

"Well, I didn't find out what was up there out of no book. Yes, be'n there—guess I'm about the only white man that has."

"*Non*," interrupted Teddy Bye and Bye, "Gus Janier she be'n oop Coppermine, Yellowknife, Fish Reevaire—all over."

"Gus Janier!" the shifty eyes glittered angrily, "What in hell do you know about Gus Janier?"

"Gus Janier ma frien'," replied the Indian, with dignity.

"You got a hell of a friend!" exploded the other, "The dam' dirty hooch peddler!"

"Gus Janier, she ain' sell no hooch."

"How does he make his livin', then? Tell me that? They hain't no one ever seen him do a tap of work. Rammin' around the country with that big dog, an' a couple of guns, an' a fish pole. Less'n he makes it squealin' a lot of lies to the Mounted about folks that's tryin' to make an honest livin'!" The man paused as if expecting a reply, but Teddy Bye and Bye merely shrugged, and stared silently into the fire, and he shifted his glance to the girl: "I s'pose he's a friend of yourn, too—Gus Janier?"

Irma Boyne flushed angrily at the sneering tone: "Who are you to be questioning me about my friends? As a matter of fact I have never laid

eyes on the man, though I have heard him mentioned many times since coming into the North."

"Ain't heard much good of him, I guess—less'n you got it from the Mounted—an' there's some of them he ain't got fooled. He ain't got no one fooled that's got brains to think with. Guns like he packs, an' good canoes, an' ca'tridges costs money. Where does he git it?"

"I presume that is his business," answered the girl.

"Yes, an' it's other folks's business, too. Wait till Constable Crowley gits somethin' on him—he'll show him!" The man suddenly dropped the belligerent tone, "But they hain't no use wastin' time talkin' about him. You was askin' me had I be'n up the Coppermine, an' I says 'yes'. What about it?"

"And, to the eastward? Have you been in the country east of the Coppermine?"

"Clean to the Bay—that's me." The shifty eyes had lost their angry glitter, the voice took on a boastful note. "Only white man that lives in the country reg'lar—except Gus Janier, an' he's always on the move. Proves what I say—he don't dast to stay long in a place. If he's all right, what's he always on the go fer?"

"We will leave Janier out of the discussion,

please. Your private quarrels are nothing to me. You say you're the only white man in the whole territory between the Coppermine and Hudson Bay?"

"I said I'm the only one that lives here reg'lar. There's the Mounted, they come an' go. An' the trader at Fullerton, but they change every little while—too lonesome up there fer a man to stick long. An' fer the last couple of years there's them fellers up on the coast—Canadian Ar'tic Expedition. I guided some of 'em east as fer as Bathurst inlet. That's me—wherever they's an' honest dollar to be picked up, guidin', er tradin', that's where you'll find Amos Nixon. That's about all the white men, except Joe Bernard. He trades up an' down the coast—an' mebbe another white man or two scattered around here an' there."

The last words caught the girl's attention. Her father might be included in "the other white man or two." As Nixon talked, her aversion and disgust for him increased. However, here was a man who professed to know the country through which she intended to travel—might even know her father, or at least give some clew to his whereabouts. "These other white men—where are they?" she asked, "You said there was another white man or two."

"They might be, an' they mightn't," the man answered evasively. "I didn't say they was, I said *mebbe* they was."

Abruptly, she flashed a direct question: "Where's John Boyne?" She thought the man started slightly. The shifty eyes swiftly met her own scrutinizing gaze, dropped to the fire, and roved over the faces of the Indians.

"Boyne," he muttered, "John Boyne. Seems like I hear'n that name som'ers, too. He ain't one of them Ar'ticers is he? They's quite a few of 'em, an' I never did git 'em all straight."

"No, he's a prospector. An oldish man, sixty-two, to be exact. Although he looks much younger. He came into this country about a year and a half ago by way of Baker Lake."

"Baker Lake—Boyne," repeated the man, "Seems like I did hear that name over around the Bay. Mebbe he's gone outside."

"No," answered the girl, "He hasn't gone outside. He's prospecting for gold somewhere between here and the Bay."

"What you huntin' him fer?"

"He's my father, and I thought maybe he'd be needing—some help."

The pale eyes seemed to flicker as the man glanced up, quickly; "Oh, so you're his gal, eh?

An' figgerin' on gittin' in to where he's at from this side." A short laugh followed the words.

"So you know him? Know, even where he is?"

The man shook his head: "Don't know nothin' about him, an' nothin' about wher' he's at. What I mean is, it's a long ways from here to Baker Lake, an' if you don't know the country, you'll never find it. It's lucky you run on to me. These here Siwashes don't know the country. All they'd do is eat grub. I know every foot of it, an' if yer pa's anywhere's between here an' the Bay, I kin find him. I'm tellin' you you're lucky to git me. I'm the best guide they is. If Radford an' Street had of hired me, like I wanted 'em to, they'd of be'n alive today. Instead of which they hires some Huskys an' gits murdered. It'll cost you ten dollars a day, an' my grub, but you're rich, an' besides you'll be savin' money in the end."

The girl hesitated, apparently counting the cost. To engage this man for a guide was unthinkable. Nevertheless, despite his denial he had betrayed knowledge of her father, even to the fact that he was "rich." If possible, she would try to worm more information out of him before sending him about his business. "How long would it take to find him?" she asked.

"Well, course, that's accordin' to wher' he's at.

Mebbe we might run onto him in a month—mebbe two months. Tell you what, you pay me twenty days' wages down, an' the rest when we find him."

Irma Boyne laughed: "You don't really think I'm fool enough to carry money with me in large sums, do you?"

The man looked disappointed: "If you ain't got no money how'd you figger to keep in grub, an' pay them Siwashes off?"

"Orders on the Hudson's Bay Company," she smiled, "And beside that I have letters to the Mounted, and to the Canadian Arctic Expedition which will take care of the questions of supplies."

Nixon scowled his disappointment: "If that's the case, I s'pose I've got to take a Comp'ny order, too." He rose abruptly to his feet. "First thing is to git red of them Siwashes. Here, you!" he growled, pointing at Teddy Bye and Bye, "Figger up how much you an' them others has got comin', an' then you turn around an' head back where you come from!"

"Just a minute," interrupted the girl coldly, "What do you mean by trying to discharge my Indians?"

"We don't need 'em no more. They'll only be the two of us, an' one canoe. We'll *cache* the other

one an' what grub we can't handle. This Husky boy of mine—he's fired, too."

The girl felt her anger rising: "What becomes of the Eskimo is no concern of mine, but these Indians are my concern. What possible right have you to try to discharge them?"

"You hired me to guide you to wher' yer pa is, an' if I'm goin' to guide, I'm goin' to run the outfit."

A laugh greeted the man's words. "Really, Mr. er—Nixon, if it were not all so perfectly absurd, I should be very angry. As it is it's merely amusing. I certainly have not hired you for a guide, despite your evident anxiety to force your services upon me. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't have you for a guide upon any terms whatever. I wouldn't trust you out of my sight. You've been trying to lie to me for the last half-hour, but you haven't succeeded. You not only know my father, but you know where he is at this minute, and you're trying to make some easy money by guiding me to him. But your little scheme for extortion won't work. I have my maps, and I have my Indians, and I'll find him without any help from you."

For a moment the same angry gleam flickered in the man's eyes that had appeared at the mention of the name of Gus Janier. Then the glance shifted,

and when he spoke his voice held a note of injured innocence: "It was fer yer own good, mom, I offered fer to go. I don't want to make no trip into that God-fersaken country—not me. But if you don't want to hire me, that's yer own business. Just like it was Radford an' Street's business when they wouldn't hire me." The shifty glance was upon the faces of the three Indians who, during the whole course of the conversation, had sat huddled beyond the fire, now and then casting fearful glances toward the Eskimo who had seated himself behind Nixon.

Teddy Bye and Bye sat apart, listening, but making no comment. The man continued: "But they hadn't got fer till the Huskies murdered 'em—yes, mom, speared 'em in the back when they wasn't lookin', that's what they done. They're all right if you know 'em—Huskies is. But if you don't know 'em, they're mean. Look at them two priests they murdered right down here to Bloddy Falls—shot 'em in the back, an' et one's liver, to boot. That's the way they do. They's a lot of Huskies fishin' in the country between here an' the Heywood Range. You an' the Siwashes'll prob'ly git murdered 'fore you git half ways, an' then you'll wisht you'd of hired me."

The girl laughed aloud. Inadvertently, the man

had dropped a piece of information that she was not slow to grasp. He had mentioned the Heywood Range, the ridge of high hills that reach eastward from Lac du Sauvage to Back's Fish River. It was somewhere in these hills that she had expected to find her father, and now the expectation amounted almost to a certainty. "No," she answered, "I won't wish I had hired you. I had much rather take my chances with the Eskimo." The girl glanced at her wrist watch. "Nearly ten o'clock!" she exclaimed. "I haven't quite got accustomed to this perpetual daylight, yet. But I'm tired, and we have some hard work ahead of us. So if you will kindly take yourself off, we will get some sleep."

The man moved surlily toward the *umiak*, pausing at a distance of a dozen yards for a parting shot: "I know wher' yer pa is, all right—but you won't never find him!"

Her answer was a mocking laugh. And that night as she lay between her blankets in the little tent, she smiled complacently. Her troubles were about over. Of course there remained many days of hard work in the ascent of the Coppermine, and the traverse of the numerous lakes of its upper reaches. But the river would lead her straight to the Heywood Mountains and there she

would find her father. She had the necessary supplies for the journey, and plenty of help to move these supplies. On the whole, the undertaking was wonderfully simple—too simple to be particularly interesting. The men who write of the North are prone to overrate its hardships. The smile broadened at thought of her father's surprise at seeing her walk into his camp, and she closed her eyes and slept.

Irma Boyne had yet to learn the North. She was even now committing the gravest error that is within the providence of the traveler beyond the outposts to commit. She was overestimating her own strength and ability, and underestimating the vicissitudes of the lean lone land. And woefully had she underestimated the cunning of Amos Nixon, whose apparently inadvertent mention of the Heywood Range had been a master stroke.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOOD MAN

IRMA BOYNE opened her eyes sleepily the following morning and glanced at her watch. It was six o'clock, and she lay listening for the sounds of the camp—the crackle of the fire, the stealthy moving about of the Indians in the cooking of breakfast and the preparation of the outfit for the trail. Surely, she thought, they could not still be sleeping. Again she listened. No, the sounds of sleeping would be more evident than the sounds of preparation, for the mission Indian, Chrysostom, was an inveterate and insistent snorer. Each moment from the closing of his eyes to the opening of them was fraught with loud and disagreeable sound. A fact which, at first, had annoyed and irritated the girl almost to the point of dismissing him from her employ. But as the weeks passed she became accustomed to it, and of late, when she had awakened in the night she found herself taking certain comfort from the sound—an added sense of security. But there was no sound of

snoring—no sound of any kind. An unnatural stillness seemed to have settled upon the land—a stillness accentuated, rather than shattered by the muffled roar of the limestone rapids of the Kendall.

Hastily she dressed, and stepping from the door of her tent, surveyed her surroundings. Close at hand, near the dead ashes of last night's fire, was a pile of duffle that she recognized as the cargoes of the two canoes. On top of this pile were Teddy Bye and Bye's blankets. The blankets of the other three Indians were not in evidence. The canoes themselves were lying bottom side up close beside the duffle. No one was in sight.

Raising her voice, the girl called Teddy Bye and Bye, and receiving no answer, she called again, and again. Finally she gave it up and built a fire from the little pile of dry kindlings and wood prepared the evening before by Teddy Bye and Bye. She brewed some tea and broiled a piece of caribou. As she ate her solitary breakfast, she tried to reason the disappearance of the Indians. The first thought that crossed her mind was that they had sighted caribou and had gone in pursuit of them. But, no, the two rifles, the 30–40 and the 22 were in their cases on top of the pile of duffle, close beside Teddy Bye and Bye's blankets. But

where were the blankets of the other Indians? And why were the canoes and the duffle hauled up from the beach and piled close to the tent? Why, also, had Teddy Bye and Bye, slept on the top of the pile instead of on the ground as was his wont?

Suddenly, a solution occurred to her. The stuff had been carried from the beach after she had retired because the Indians feared that Nixon and his Eskimo might steal them. Perhaps, they had tried it, and the Indians had gone in pursuit. But, in that case, why had they not taken the guns, at least the heavy rifle? For Nixon was armed, he had carried a rifle, and she had noted a bulge in the front of his shirt that could only have been made by a revolver of large calibre. Perhaps they had gone to explore the river, but one of them could have done that as well as four, leaving the others free to prepare breakfast and break camp.

A slight sound from the direction of the scrub attracted her attention, and she looked up quickly to see Teddy Bye and Bye approaching from the direction of the Kendall.

"Where in the world have you been?" asked the girl, with a trace of annoyance in her tone, "And where are the rest of them? Here it is after seven o'clock and we should right now be on the river."

The Indian, his face impassive as a mask, filled

his tin cup with tea, from the pot, and reached for a chunk of the broiled meat. Then, he gravely pointed toward the direction from which he had just come. "Gone," he grunted, and holding the meat in his fingers, bit off a mouthful.

"Gone!" cried the girl, "Who's gone? And where?"

"Injun gone. Back to Mackenzie. Me, I'm try for ketch, but dey got too mooch good, w'at you call, de start."

"Gone back to the Mackenzie! What for?"

"Dem 'fraid de Innuit—de Eskimo. Dem ain' see no Innuit befor'—an' dem hear de w'ite man talk 'bout Innuit kill um Injun, an' dem gon'."

"Nonsense!" cried the girl, angrily, "He was lying! He just wanted a job, and when he found out I wouldn't give him one he tried to scare me. But it didn't work. No one but a fool would believe him."

The Indian shrugged: "Dem Injun know 'bout dem two pries' git kill. Dem t'ink, mebbe-so, dem git kill, too."

"You don't mean to sit there and tell me the Eskimo really did murder two priests! It's preposterous! They're a peaceable and friendly people. They wouldn't hurt anybody. This man, Nixon, or whatever he calls himself, made it up

out of whole cloth. He was lying. I don't believe a word of it."

Teddy Bye and Bye shook his head: "De Innuit kill de pries', all right. De Mounted, Inspector LaNauze, an' Coporal Bruce dem hont roun' oop on de coas' fer mos' two year, an' den dey ketch um two Innuit w'at kill de pries', an' bring um back for put in de jail—mebbe-so de w'ite mans hang dem oop wit' de rope."

Irma Boyne eyed the Indian narrowly: "Are you telling me the truth?" she asked, sharply, "Are you sure of that?"

Teddy Bye and Bye nodded emphatically: "*Oui*, I'm see um Innuit w'en dey bring um back. Dat de trut'—everybody know 'bout dat. Nixon, him know de Injun know 'bout de pries'. Dat w'y he tell 'bout de Innuit so mooch. He ain' try for scare you, he try for scare de Injun, so we ron away back to Mackenzie. Den, w'en you all 'lone, you got for hire him for de guide."

"The dog!" cried the girl, angrily, "The sneaking cur! So, that's what his game was? Well, he better not show up around this camp again! I'll tell him to his face just exactly what I think of him. I'd go *alone* before I'd hire him!"

"Hee's face ain' care w'at you tell um 'bout. Him bad mans. Gon for mak' de trouble for us,

bye um bye. Dat better we shoot um nex' tam we see um, an' he ain' kin mak' no trouble no mor'."

"Shoot him!" cried the girl in horror, "No, no, no, we can't do that! Can't murder him! Only in self defence can we shoot—and I don't think it will ever come to that. He's too much of a coward, you can see it in his face."

The Indian shrugged, and made no reply.

"Anyway," said the girl, brightening up, "You're not afraid, and neither am I. Not afraid of the Eskimo nor of Nixon. We can push on up the river, can't we. Tell me, why weren't you afraid, like the others?"

"Me, I'm scairt joos' so mooch lak' dem. I'm t'ink dem Innuit gon' kill us, mebbe-so, lak' de pries'. But, Teddy Bye and Bye, she good man. She say she go long till you fin' de *père*. *Voilà!* I'm go 'long. I'm ain' ron away. Eef I'm ron 'way I'm ain' no good man no mor'. De factor—an' de Mounted an' de odder mans on de reever dem say, 'To hell wit' um. Him ron 'way. Him, w'at you call—de queeter!' Den I'm ain' git no good job no mor'—me."

The girl rose to her feet: "You are a good man, Teddy Bye and Bye!" she exclaimed, "And you may be sure you won't lose anything by standing

by me. And back on the river they'll know all about it—the Mounted and the factors. I'll tell them all how you stayed when the others ran away. But the Eskimo won't kill us. If we have any further trouble on this trip, it will be from that man, Nixon, and not from any Eskimo. But, why did you bring the canoes and all the supplies up here by the tent? Did you think Nixon would try to steal them?"

"*Non*, I'm ain' t'ink Nixon steal um. I'm know dem Injuns gon' for ron 'way. Dem mission Injuns no good. Dem too mooch scairt. I'm tak de canoe an' de grub oop here, I'm t'ink, mebbe-so, dem ain' try to ron 'way. I'm t'ink dey mor' scairt for hongre den scairt for Innuit."

"But, can they find their way back to the Mackenzie on foot?" cried the girl, "And what will they eat?"

Teddy Bye and Bye shrugged a shrug of unconcern; "Plent' long trail. Plent' muskeg. Plent' beeg swamp. Mebbe-so dem eat berries, kill de young goose, an' de duck wit' de stone. Kill de feesh on de rapids wit' de stick. Mebbe-so nex' tam dem ain' ron 'way.'

Almost the entire morning was spent in going over the supplies and making a one-canoe outfit from the cargoes of both. When at last they were

ready for the trail, the girl contemplated the discarded duffle and the extra canoe. "What are we going to do with this stuff?" she asked.

For answer the Indian led the way into the scant timber, and set to work with the axe in the building of a small log *cache*. When it was completed, and the top logs weighted with heavier logs and stones, he constructed a pair of low log trestles nearby upon which he carefully placed the canoe, bottom side up.

"Why didn't you just turn the canoe upside down on top of the *cache?*" asked the girl.

"*Non*. Eef de beeg bear com' 'long an' smell de grub, he kin bus' de *cache*. We ain' kin build de *cache* so strong de bear can't bus' heem. Eef de canoe on top de *cache* de bear bus' de canoe all to hell for git de grub."

"Do you expect to find this stuff here when we get back?" asked the girl in surprise.

"Mebbe-so. Mebbe-so not. Eef som' one com' 'long an' need de grub for kep' from starve, he kin open de *cache* an' tak' joost so mooch lak' he need—no mor'. Dat good. Eef he tak' mor'—eef he rob de *cache*, dat ver' bad. Som'one shoot um, mebbe-so. Mebbe-so de Mounted ketch um an' put um een de jail for so long till he hav' die. Dat ain' no good to rob de *cache*."

After a hasty meal the canoe was carried across the point to the Coppermine, and the duffle followed, some five or six hundred pounds, made up into light packs, as the girl had insisted that she do her full share both in the handling of the canoe, and on the portages. "I'll love it!" she cried, enthusiastically, "I'm tired of being just a passenger. I'm almost glad the others ran away!"

The duffle was stowed amidships, the girl took her place at the bow paddle, and the long tedious ascent of the Coppermine was begun.

As the canoe passed out of sight around a bend of the river, Amos Nixon, with a grin, rose from his place of concealment behind a bunch of scrub, and struck out on foot for his camp, a half-mile down the river. "Run off three out of four of 'em anyhow," he muttered, "An' plenty of time to git the other one later. I've got the chanct of a lifetime right here if I play my cards right. To hell with goin' to the coast fer supplies when I've got a hull *cache* full of 'em right in under my nose."

CHAPTER V

GUS JANIER

Coporal Downey, R. N. W. M. P., knelt in his canoe with eyes to the front and paddle trailing, ready at a twist of the wrist to shoot the frail craft to the right or to the left to keep from plunging headlong onto rock or shallow.

Many years in the service had not dulled the keen delight with which this veteran guardian of the untracked wastes always descended a swift-water river. And the Bear was one of his favorites. Swift-flowing, icy-cold, clear as a crystal, it rushes from Great Bear Lake to the Mackenzie in a series of rapids and shallows and swift deep stretches that are the delight of the experienced canoeman. The banks shot past in an ever-changing panorama of beauty. Long stretches of grassy shore fairly blazing with brilliant patches of wild-flowers, gave place with startling abruptness to steep cutbanks, and they in turn to perpendicular ice-cliffs, their bases worn and cut

by the swift-flowing water into all manner of grotesque and fantastic carvings. The roar of the rapids by means of which the river plunges through the canyon of the Franklin Mountains was music to the ears of the grizzled monitor of the outlands.

But this day he was not thinking so much of the roar of the rapids, nor of the wild beauty of changing shores. Ever since his meeting with Irma Boyne he had been wondering, not exactly worrying, but wondering how she would fare in the indescribably wild and desolate country beyond Great Bear Lake. A hundred times, in the week or more that he had paddled along the shore of the great lake, he had found himself wondering, and each time he had dismissed the girl from his mind with an effort. But, always after a few miles, she would be there again, introduced by memory of a word, a look, a smile, as they had talked together across the little fire.

"It's because she's like—*her*," muttered the man, between clenched teeth. "God! Can't a man ever forget?" And then, for miles, and miles, and miles, as the canoe shot swiftly westward, the officer's thoughts lingered in a reverie of other years, of his earlier days in the Service, of the little Hudson's Bay post at Lashing Water, of the old

white-haired, whist-playing factor, of Murdo MacFarlane, and of the passing of Margot Molaire.

He had been Corporal Downey then, and he is Corporal Downey now, and the reason for this, only Corporal Downey knows. Times without number he has been recommended and cited for promotion, and each time he has steadfastly refused promotion. Sergeants, and commissioned officers alike have tried, time and again to find the answer, and have failed. Admittedly one of the most capable men the Service ever listed upon its roll, he has been tendered an Inspectorship, coupled with unofficial hints from high officials that a Superintendency was not so far in the offing. But he declined the honor, as many times he has declined the Sergeancy, and the reason no man knows. So Corporal Downey has remained through the years the riddle of the Service—a man of large calibre, kindly, efficient, wise. A man all for the Service, and yet, even among his intimates, a man of mystery—a man within himself.

Bear Rock, with its fantastic coloring of highlights and shadows, loomed ahead, the speed of the current slackened, and Downey began leisurely to paddle. A half mile above the junction of the Bear and the Mackenzie, upon a grassy flat upon

the left bank of the river, the white canvas of a little tent caught his eye and even as he swung the bow of his canoe toward it, the tent collapsed and a man began to fold it for packing. A canoe was drawn up on the beach, and beside it were piled various articles of camp gear. Evidently the man was in the act of breaking camp. The officer recognized him, and before he beached his canoe he was smiling. "I'll just slip up on him this time without his knowin' it," he thought, and without lifting the paddle from the water, shot the canoe shoreward. The man, still busy with the tent, had not looked up. "Hello, Downey!" he called, suddenly, "What in the devil you doin' all that splashin' around for? Don't you know you'll roile the river up, an' kill all the fish?"

The officer's smile broadened as he stepped out of the canoe and drew it up beside the other: "Hello, Gus! What you doin' here? An' where in thunder you be'n for the past six months? Last time I saw you was, let's see—it was over on the east end of Slave Lake. You remember? Your dogs were laid up with sore feet, and you didn't have grub enough on hand to last a week. You wouldn't go back with me to Fort Resolution and be saved from starvation. It was cold, if I remember—let's see." Both had seated themselves

on the grass, and Downey reached for his notebook, and thumbed its pages. "Here it is: January 6th: Investigatin' report of Indian family starvin' on McLeod Bay. Made nearly complete circle of bay, January 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th. No evidence of any Indians on bay this winter. At noon of 10th, came upon camp of Gus Janier. Had not moved camp for a week. Doctorin' his dogs' feet. Food for only a few days in camp. Refused offer of food, also refused to accompany me to Fort Resolution. Has seen no Indians around east end of lake. Remained in his camp two hours, then struck out for Resolution. Temperature —45. Wind, Northeast, 30 miles."

As the officer returned the diary to his pocket, the other regarded him with a grin: "Ain't you forgot somethin'?" he asked.

"No-o, I guess not—nothin' of any consequence, Why?"

The younger man shook his head in mock solemnity: "You're gettin' old, Downey, an' careless—careless with your diary, an' careless of Government supplies. I don't keep any diary myself, but if I did I could turn back to that same date—January 10th, wasn't it? Here's what it would say: 'Found on ice near water-hole, six pounds bacon, twenty-five pounds smoked fish, ten pounds flour,

one quarter pound tea. Old man Downey is a good old soul. Damn his eyes!' You must have lost that stuff off your sled when you pulled out of my camp."

"Must have," admitted Downey, gravely. "Can't recollect missin' any grub, though. By the way, did you run across any Injuns back from the lake?"

"Yes, a few, but they were in good shape—all but one family up on a little lake just north of Lake MacKay. They had three kids, all little bits of devils, and the man had managed to chop his foot, and couldn't tend to his traps. His foot was in pretty bad shape—all full of proud flesh and pus and as sore as the devil. Wouldn't let me touch it at first, and the woman was worse than he was. But I persuaded 'em to after a while. They'd got caught in a sort of temporary camp, and the old girl had her hands full tryin' to snare enough rabbits to keep 'em goin'. I stuck around a couple of weeks, and moved 'em over into some good rabbit country, and fixed up the foot, and shot 'em a caribou or two, and when I left they were in pretty good shape."

"Too bad you don't keep a diary, Gus," said Downey, a smile twitching the corners of his mouth. "There'd be some things in it I'd kind

of like to read. For instance, about you persuadin' those Injuns to let you work on his foot—how'd you go at that persuadin'—what kind of argument did you put up to 'em?"

Gus Janier doubled his two fists, and held them up before the officer: "These," he grinned, "An' about sixty feet of *babiche* line. He wasn't so hard to handle, but I had to knock the old woman down three times before she'd stay down long enough for me to get her tied. An' I had to tie the oldest one of the kids, too. The little devil couldn't have been over five or six, but he sunk his teeth into my thumb to the bone. Oh, she was a lively camp for a while, you ought to have seen the fun! We quit good friends, though. Before I left they'd have given me anything they had. When I pulled out the foot was about healed up, and the old boy was hobbling around on a kind of crutch I made for him. It was comical as hell to see him tryin' to rig a snowshoe onto that crutch."

"You've got quite a lot of those friends scattered around over a few million square miles of bush, ain't you, boy? I run onto 'em every now an' then."

"Oh, I guess there's some. An' a hell of a lot of 'em that ain't my friends. That reminds me,

I ran across that damned Amos Nixon up on the head of Fish River."

"When was that? An' what was he doin' up there?"

"This spring, before the ice went out. I don't know what his game was—can't figure what it could be, way up in there. But, it's somethin'. He ain't up there for any good."

"He ain't anywheres for any good," agreed Downey. "I'd like to get holt of Nixon. Want to question him about some *caches* the Canadian Arctic Expedition reported robbed. They had him hired for a while, till they fired him for stealin'. I sent word to Fort MacPherson, and to Baker Lake to be on the lookout for him. We'll pick him up before long. He'll be showin' up somewheres for supplies."

"He's a bad egg, all right. Got it in for me. You fellows have got a leak somewhere."

"A leak?" The officer regarded the man gravely, "What do you mean?"

"I mean that some inside stuff is gettin' outside —right where it'll do the most harm."

Downey puffed at his pipe for several minutes, then slowly shook his head: "I can't figure it, Gus. There ain't a man in the division but what I'd bet my life on."

"Guess you'd be safe enough at that," smiled Janier, "The leak ain't in this division. It's yonder." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder to the eastward.

"How do you know?"

"Last year Puk-puk and I ran onto a hooch *cache* over on Kazan River just south of Baker Lake." At the sound of his name the great Chesapeake dog that was Janier's inseparable companion raised his head and fixed his yellow eyes upon the face of his master. "Didn't we, Puk-puk?" The dog's tail thumped the ground lazily, and Janier continued. "I reported the find to the Inspector at detachment headquarters, and he sent a certain Constable down to investigate. He couldn't find anything. But, when I ran onto Amos Nixon up on Fish River this spring, he managed to show me that he knew who had tipped his *cache* off to the Inspector."

"M Division has always had good men," said Downey, regretfully, "If anybody but you had told me that, I wouldn't have believed him."

"Yes, and they've got good men there, now," said Janier. "Every man of 'em, except this one —an' he's goin' to take his discharge this winter. His time will be up then. He's *kultus komooks.*

Shouldn't be surprised if he threw in with Nixon."

Downey nodded, thoughtfully: "Guess I've got him located, all right. Guess he won't find no obstructions throw'd in his road when he asks fer his discharge. They squeeze into the Service once in a while, fellows like him—but they don't last long. By the way, Gus, why don't you join on? Ain't you about tired of roamin' around the country doin' nothin' but huntin' an' fishin'?"

Janier laughed: "Tired of it! We'll never get tired of it—Puk-puk and I. And, besides, we ain't just huntin' an' fishin'."

"What in the devil are you doin', then? You don't need to tell me that what little tradin' you do, here an' there, is enough to satisfy a young fellow with the energy you've got!"

"No, it ain't the tradin', either. It's just—the *livin'!* If I was in the Service, I'd have to go where someone sent me. Maybe the Inspector would send me up the Mackenzie, at just the time my hunch told me to hit over around the Bay. I couldn't do it, Downey. The way it is, I'm free to go wherever I please, whenever I please, and do whatever I please when I get there."

The old Corporal smiled: "But, all that don't get you anywheres——"

"It's got me everywhere you've ever been, and

I'll bet a whole lot of places that you don't know anything about."

"Oh, sure—that ain't what I meant. But, it's time you was *doin'* somethin'. You're gettin' along now to where a man ought to be accomplishin' somethin'—layin' somethin' by. You don't figure on goin' on like this for ever, do you?"

"Wish I could," laughed the other, "but unfortunately, I've got to die sometime. An', as for layin' somethin' by, it don't take much to keep me goin'. What Dad left will last me a long time, yet."

"Lots of folks talks, an' lots of 'em kind of wonders what you're really up to."

"Let 'em talk, an' let 'em wonder. Fact is, I don't know, myself. All I know is that sometime, someplace, I'm going to run onto somethin' big."

"Somethin' big?" asked Downey, with interest. "What do you mean?"

"Haven't the least idea in the world. Maybe it'll be gold, or copper, or iron. Maybe a chunk of timber. Maybe a development proposition. Or a water-power project. But, I've got a kind of a hunch, someway, it'll be gold."

"Humph! The pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow," growled the officer.

"Maybe," answered the younger man, solemnly. "If I find it I'll give you the gold. The pot's half-full of gold, and half full of happiness, you know."

"How old you gettin' to be, Gus?"

"Twenty-four."

"Where you headin', now?"

"Well," answered the younger man, speculatively, "Until about an hour ago, I was headin' up the Mackenzie. Thought I'd kind of like to switch off west into the mountains somewhere. I was goin' to camp here for a day or two. But all of a sudden I got a hunch to hit up the Bear. Probably wind up over around the Bay, somewhere, in the fall."

"Have you seen Gaudet?"

"No, didn't go down to the post. Camped here last evenin' and just laid around this mornin' takin' it easy."

Downey smiled: "Within half a mile of a post with several white men to talk to, an' haven't be'n down to see 'em!"

"What's the use. Gaudet's like all the rest of 'em. You know Dad was a factor, an' all the old timers knew him, and liked him. They all either hint around that I ought to be doin' somethin', or else come right out and say so. What business is it of theirs what I do. If I wanted to work for the

Company, I could get a post easy enough. Why can't they let me alone?"

"Don't think hard of 'em, boy. They're doin' what they think is fer your own good—ain't I just be'n raggin' you myself, about the same thing? So, you're hittin' out for the Bay? What you goin' to do over there?"

Janier shrugged: "Haven't the least idea in the world—may be I won't get to the Bay. Might get a fresh hunch, an' hit up onto the coast, or down to the settlements."

"S'pose, though, you do keep on to the Bay," speculated Downey, his eyes on the high-flung skyline of Bear Rock. "You've got your canoe along, so you couldn't hardly swing up along the coast. The way you'll prob'ly go is up the Coppermine an' across to Fish River, an' then drop down onto the Thelon."

Janier laughed. "What's on your mind, Old Timer? Want to deputize me to bring in Amos Nixon?"

"No. Nixon's due to show up for supplies somewhere, soon, an' someone will pick him up. An', yet, I was thinkin' of Nixon, too—partly. When you come through the Fish River country in the spring, you didn't see no one else up there, did you?"

"No," answered Janier, with a trace of interest in his tone. "I didn't travel far on the Fish River. Why, is someone supposed to be up there?"

Downey nodded: "Yes, somewheres over in there. On Fish River, or the Thelon, or some feeder. Fellow name of John Boyne. Sort of an oldish fellow, I guess—be'n all over hell. Cleaned up about a million in the Klondike, an' now he's putterin' around up in that God-forsaken country. Be'n up there about a year, an' ain't be'n heard from."

Janier nodded: "Yes, heard about him last year at Baker Lake. He'd started out from detachment headquarters a couple of months before I got there. Expected to pick up an Eskimo guide somewhere around Beverly Lake. Prospector, he was—huntin' Hearne's lost mines."

"That's the fellow. An' when you mentioned seein' Nixon up on Fish River, it kind of started me to thinkin'."

"By Gosh!" cried Janier, suddenly, "I believe you're right! It's a wonder I didn't think of that. Fact is, I'd forgotten all about this Boyne. I couldn't figure what Nixon would be doin' on Fish River. Guess I'll just slip over that way, an' look around a bit. Better go along. It's really your job, you know—not mine."

The Corporal shook his head: "Can't do it, Gus. Like to the best way in the world, but I've got my work cut out for me, up river. You can do more in that country than anyone else, if you'll do it. No one knows the country like you do, an' the fact that you ain't in the Service will help you."

"Anyway, it will give me somethin' to do. I might as well be knockin' around up there as anywhere. I'll find this John Boyne for you, Downey. Or maybe, I'll find Hearne's lost mines, who knows?"

Downey shook his head, sombrely: "Damn Hearne's lost mines!" The vehemence of the imprecation surprised Janier, but before he could make any comment, the officer continued, "I'll see that you get paid for your time and supplies."

"Never mind the pay. An', as for the supplies," he pointed with a grin to his rifle, and fishing rod case. "We'll just let the country furnish the grub."

The officer rose and stepped to his canoe. "Well, I must be gettin' along. So long, Gus."

"So long, Downey. You'll prob'ly hear from me sometime along in the fall, or maybe not till winter."

Downey nodded: "Take your time, boy." He stood, resting on his paddle: "You know, I get

hunches once in a while, myself. I got one now. It's about you—this hunch is. It says that you're goin' to find somethin' over yonder,—at the foot of the rainbow."

Janier laughed: "Gold?"

Downey shook his head, as he took his place in the canoe: "Well—mebbe gold. This hunch of mine though—it don't say nothin' about gold." And the next moment the canoe shot out into the current of the river.

With little wrinkles of perplexity gathering upon his forehead, Janier watched until the canoe disappeared from sight—but, Corporal Downey did not look back.

CHAPTER VI

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Amos Nixon and his Eskimo, Kautak, spent the afternoon following the departure of Irma Boyne and Teddy Bye and Bye up the river, in breaking their own camp and rifling the *cache*. The *umiak*, or skin boat, was discarded, and the canoe from the *cache*, together with all its stores, was removed to the river, the canoe loaded, and worked some three or four miles up stream where the two camped for the night.

Followed, then, many days of up-river work, sometimes paddling, sometimes track-lining, and at others portaging the load around white-water rapids. Twice each day Nixon scouted ahead for the purpose of ascertaining the progress of the girl and her Indian. This progress was slow, at first, for despite the eagerness and persistence with which Irma Boyne worked, the greater part of the grind fell upon the shoulders of Teddy Bye and Bye.

Toward evening of the twelfth day, as Nixon lay behind a screen of scrub at the crest of a low

ridge, and watched the two portage their outfit around a boisterous rapid, he was forced into grudging admiration. "Beats hell how she's took holt of this here work," he muttered. "She's right now packin' damn near as much as the Injun, an' yiste'day, she done a four-mile stretch of track-linin', belly-deep in that there cold water. Didn't think no white woman could stand the gaff. Most of 'em would jest nach'lly curl up an' quit. What'n hell d' she come up here fer, anyway, fightin' flies, an' mosquitoes, an' rivers an' such, when she could of rared back down where she come from an' had a good time blowin' the old man's money?"

On the twentieth day of the ascent of the Coppermine, at a short distance above the head of a dangerous rapid, the river suddenly broadened into Red Rock Lake. From a point of vantage Nixon cursed his luck when he noted that the girl chose to skirt the southwest shore, thus avoiding the necessity for either coasting, or encountering the rough water across the mouths of several broad, deep arms of the lake. Mumbling and cursing, the man made his way back to his camp at the foot of the rapid, and launched forth into a tirade against the unoffending Eskimo, who understanding little of the philippic, cared less.

The following morning the two negotiated the portage, and a short time later, pushed out onto the waters of Red Rock, and holding to the north-east shore, paddled steadily until late in the evening.

It was Nixon's plan to pass the other canoe somewhere upon the broad waters of either Red Rock, or Point Lake, and once in the lead, to make all possible speed up the long chain of lakes to the very base of the Heywood range, where instead of striking into the mountains he would make a portage to the headwaters of the little known Icy River. He could then drop down to Back's Fish river, where, a little to the eastward of Sussex Lake, he knew that John Boyne was prospecting a succession of jagged and much faulted ridges which he believed held the mother lode from which came the scattered fragments of drift that he had been laboriously and patiently collecting for the better part of a year, during the first six months of which this same Nixon had been in his employ as guide.

With the uneducated man's respect for education, Nixon had, for many months, believed to a certainty that Boyne would eventually discover an enormously valuable deposit of gold.

When, more than a year before, John Boyne

had reached Baker Lake detachment of the Mounted in company with the Fort Churchill patrol, he had no difficulty whatever in satisfying the Inspector in charge, of his ability to take care of himself in the bleak outlands to the westward. Whereupon the Inspector had detailed Constable Crowley to accompany the man as far as Beverly Lake where, among the eight or ten families of natives who were supposed to be fishing in the vicinity, he would be able to pick up a guide familiar with the Fish River country to the westward and northward.

At the Aberdeen narrows the two had come upon Amos Nixon, renegade white man, who for years had eked out a precarious living by traffic, both licit and illicit, among the natives and the whalers who wintered along the coast. This Constable Crowley was a moral weakling who had, in some manner, managed to enter the service of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, that body of men which for its high standard of efficiency, courage, and honor, has not its equal in the world. Minor infringements and derelictions in several stations among the settlements had led his superiors to transfer him to the far north with the idea that the ordeal would "make him, or break him." There it was that Crowley and Nixon had formed

the acquaintance that, a few months later was to develop into an alliance.

Nixon offered his services as guide, and Boyne employed him. In the matter of packing and guiding, the renegade proved eminently satisfactory. He knew the country even better than any native knew it and the fact that he understood English saved Boyne much time, in that Boyne could describe the physical aspect of certain formations he was seeking, and send Nixon scouting for them, while he, himself, remained near camp to prospect a ledge of drift, or the float on the floor of a rapid.

To such extent was the arrangement satisfactory. Personally Boyne despised his guide who never ceased his whining complaints at the activities of the Mounted in the persecution of a man who was trying to make "an honest livin'." In retrospect, he would dwell upon the days before 1903 when the Police came North to the coast,—of the easy money of the vicious traffic in "winter wives," and of the abuse and rascality practised upon the natives in the days before Law and Order came marching into the North.

For six months Boyne endured the man for the sake of his efficiency. Then came the suspicion that his notes and observations were being method-

ically examined during his absence from camp. Whereupon Boyne devised the plan of sealing his notebooks with nearly invisible strands of cobweb, and the suspicion became a certainty, and with scant ceremony, Nixon was discharged and sent about his business. For a month Boyne was alone pushing slowly westward along the Thelon.

Near the big bend he succeeded in hiring an Eskimo, but the man's inability to understand even the simplest orders, together with his innumerable taboos, and superstitions, rendered him valueless, and a few weeks later, Boyne was glad indeed to dismiss him and employ an old, and extraordinarily intelligent Indian who was returning southward after trading with the Eskimo on Fish River. This Indian, Nenikna, had a crude working knowledge of English, and a sense of responsibility that with the passing of the months developed into a strong personal attachment for his employer.

Twice since his discharge Nixon had appeared in Boyne's camp, each time merely as a passing visitor who bore no ill will, and who showed only casual interest in the success of Boyne's venture. A pose that did not in the least deceive Boyne, who had long since decided that when he found

the mother lode, the record of its location should never leave his person.

Having satisfied himself upon the last of these visits that Boyne had not yet made his strike, Nixon decided on a dash to the coast for supplies which he expected to purchase from Joe Bernard. For his association with Boyne, had convinced him that the man would actually strike gold, and when he did! At this point a leer of greed, and hatred, and cunning would twist the man's features—Well, he and not Boyne would profit by it. He would keep close watch on Boyne. Many things could happen, and if worse came to worst, and the Mounted became active—was not Crowley his friend?

It was upon this expedition to the coast that Nixon had accidently encountered Irma Boyne at the mouth of the Kendall River. Twenty-five years of wolfish existence beyond the outposts of civilization had developed in the man a certain measure of diabolical cunning, and no sooner had he learned the identity of the girl than he set about to turn the adventure of her presence in the North to account.

His first plan of forcing her to hire him as guide having miscarried, he abandoned it for the moment, and after having dropped the word that he

knew would keep the girl searching fruitlessly in the Heywood Mountains, he determined to slip on ahead and ascertain whether or not Boyne had made his strike. The robbing of the *cache* precluded the necessity for the trip to the coast and on Red Rock Lake he and the Eskimo slipped past the girl and by forcing the trail, arrived again at the camp of Boyne a few days later.

During a conversation Boyne inadvertently let fall certain remarks that convinced Nixon that he was upon the eve of the discovery of the mother lode. Carefully concealing the fact of this accidental information from Boyne, Nixon and his Eskimo struck out for Beverly Lake with the intention of procuring liquor from his *cache* to be used in disposing of the Indian guides of both the girl and her father.

At the big bend of the Thelon he came upon Constable Crowley and a native making slow work of forcing a canoe upstream. The two canoes were immediately beached and, drawing out of earshot of the natives, Crowley and Nixon squatted in the scrub. Crowley tendered a flat flask. Nixon drank deeply, and scowled; "I s'pose they hain't a hell of a lot of this licker left," he remarked, sourly. "Time I git it this fer in, an' what with the resks I take, it stands me quite a bit."

Crowley grinned: "Don't know's you'd have no kick comin' if they wasn't none of it left," he opined. "Where'd you be now, if it had of be'n anyone else besides me that come on you that day on the Kazan? But, you don't need to worry none. All I've draw'd off is two pints—one after I'd left you with old man Boyne, an' this here one. What's become of Boyne? Has he found what he was after? Or has he give it up?"

"He hain't neither one. He's still peckin' around them rock ridges, but he hain't located nothin'—yet."

Crowley looked up quickly at the tone of the last word: "You don't think he's really goin' to find gold, do you?"

"I do'no," answered Nixon, noncommittally, "You can't never tell."

"Say, Nixon," said the officer, after a long pause: "If he does, what then?"

"Well—they'll be plenty time to figger on that when it happens."

"Maybe—but, talkin' about me—I'd ruther we done a little figgerin' right now. Might save time later."

"Meanin', which?" asked Nixon, with a sidewise glance at the other.

"Meanin' like this. You an' me figgered on

throwin' in together didn't we, when my time's up?"

"Sure, we did."

"Well, what I'm gittin' at, this here agreement holds good, in case it was a minin' proposition, same as if it was only tradin', don't it?"

Nixon grinned: "You kind of fergit it hain't me that's doin' the prospectin'—it's Boyne. Looks like he'd be the one to see about goin' pardners with, if it's minin' you want."

Crowley returned the grin: "It ain't who does the prospectin', it's who files the claim that counts. Am I in—or ain't I?"

"Sure, you're in. But, what you doin' way over here this time of year?"

"Oh, couple of things. One of 'em is I'm tryin' to find a feller name of Amos Nixon. He's wanted fer robbin' some *caches* of the Canadian Arctic Expedition."

"It's a damn lie!" cried Nixon. "I never robbed no *cache!*"

"Well, of course," grinned Crowley, "If anyone was to bring you in, you could tell that to the judge. Bein' as I reported last trip that you'd hired out to Boyne fer a guide, I'm supposed to be headin' fer Boyne's camp. Runnin' onto you, this way, shows me I'm pretty clost to it. It

would of be'n hell to pay if I'd run right onto Boyne first, instead of you."

"Boyne's camp hain't noways clost to here."

"What you doin' here, then?"

"I was hittin' fer Baker Lake, fer some supplies," lied Nixon.

"It's a damn good thing I run onto you, then," laughed Crowley, "'Cause the minute you'd showed your nose around Baker Lake, it would have be'n Port Nelson fer yourn, an' someone else would have took out Boyne's supplies."

"I ain't workin' fer Boyne!" Nixon growled. "He fired me 'cause he s'picioned I was goin' through his notes. But, damn him! He hain't red of me! I'm keepin' cases on him, an' when he makes his strike, he'll never git out of the country! I'll file that claim, when it's filed."

Again Crowley laughed: "Guess you mean me, don't you, Nixon?"

"You? Didn't I tell you you'd be in on it? But, I'll do the filin' myself."

"An' get gathered in, the first minute you show'd yer face," taunted the officer.

At the words Nixon paled. For a full half-minute he stared into the officer's face as though striving to comprehend the words, then suddenly he burst into a volley of obscene curses. "Out-

lawed!" he cried, in a voice shrill with rage. When finally he became capable of sane coherence: "Twenty-five years in the country, an' now I'm outlawed!"

Crowley nodded: "You be'n lucky," he pronounced dryly.

"Lucky! Lucky, you say, an' here I don't dast to show up nowheres—not even fer grub! Damn the Mounted! Damn them Ar'ticers! An' all fer a couple sled-loads of grub I took, figgerin' to pay 'em back next time I come along that way."

"Cussin' don't git you nowheres," reminded Crowley. "What we got to do is to git down to cases. I told you I was out here fer a couple of reasons, an' I ain't only told you one of 'em."

"What'n hell do I care what yer out here fer?" snapped Nixon. "I got troubles of my own! Where'n hell am I goin' to git my grub if I don't dast to show up nowheres? Tell me that! Onct the Mounted gits after a man he's done. They'll git him—mebbe today—tomorrow, next month, next year, ten years—it don't make no difference—an' that's what makes it hell! 'Course, long as you're on the job, it's all right. But your time'll soon be up, an' what then? S'pose they send someone else out? S'pose they send old man Downey?"

Crowley sneered: "Old man Downey! To hell with old man Downey. I'm sick an' tired of hearin' about him. Every station an' detachment I've ever be'n at it's always the same—from the Superintendent down to the newest Rooky. Coporal Downey, this, an' Coporal Downey, that. Coporal Downey he done so an' so. Or, if Coporal Downey was here he'd fix it. Hearin' 'em talk anyone'd think Coporal Downey had God backed off the map when it come to able-mindedness! Guess if he know'd all they claim he knows, an' kin do all they think he kin do, he'd be more'n jest a Coporal—an' him grey-headed."

Nixon was unimpressed. Twenty-five years in the outlands had worked their convictions. "Jest the same," he answered, lugubriously, "I'd ruther have God after me than Downey—God ain't in the Mounted."

"Look a here, Nixon," said Crowley, "Seems like you're doin' a lot of bellyachin' about nothin'. What if the Mounted is after you? They can't do nothin' but arrest you. It takes a trial to convict you. An' when it comes down to a trial, where's their evidence at? They can't prove you robbed their *caches*. No one seen you do it. An' you ain't goin' to be caught with any of the stuff on you that was in 'em. If you was, you

could claim you traded fer it off'n some natives."

"Yes, but sometimes it's a couple years before the trial comes off. Them Ar'ticers hain't goin' to come clean down from the coast fer to testify till they git good an' damn ready, an' in the meantime, I got to lay in jail! An' besides the Mounted kin too try a man! Didn't they try them two Huskies fer fightin' over to MacPherson, an' jail 'em fer thirty days?"

Crowley laughed: "Anyone'd think yer head wasn't made fer nothin' else but to hang a cap onto. It's this way. They got to let you out on bail till the case comes up if they take you down to the settlements. An' if they decide to try you up here in the North, an' hand you sixty, or ninety days, you kin afford to take it an' clean the slate. If they hand it to you stiffer, you got an appeal, an' in the meantime they got to let you out on bail—so there y'are."

"Oh, sure—there I be!" growled Nixon, with ponderous sarcasm. "They's only one little thing you've fergot. Where's this here bail comin' from? Mebbe you kin tell me that, seein' yer so damn smart."

"Sure, I kin. That is, pervidin' you an' me git holt of old man Boyne's claim. When that's re-

corded, I'll guarantee to raise the bail—an' not only the bail, but the money to fight the case, an' to develop the proposition."

For the first time since he had learned he was outlawed, Nixon saw a ray of hope. The scowl left his face, and the look of deep gloom that had lurked in his pale eyes gave place to a gleam of wolfish cunning. "You sure you kin do that?"

"Sure I kin. I got a head on me that ain't solid bone, an' neither they ain't nothin' inside it so loose you kin hear it rattle." He wagged his head in convincing proof that his statement was true.

"Well, then," said Nixon, "All we got to do is stick around till Boyne makes his strike, and then when we git the claim filed, I'll give myself up, claimin' I only jest heer'd I was wanted. That ort to be a p'int in my favor—givin' myself up."

"How do you figger on gittin' holt of Boyne's claim?"

"Wait till he locates it, an' then sneak in an' copy his location off'n his note book, an' beat him to the recorder. That's the easiest way."

"It won't never work. Because when Boyne makes his strike he ain't goin' to leave no note books where anyone could git to 'em—not with

him knowin' you're prowlin' around the country, he ain't."

"All right, then—there's another way. It's Boyne's own fault if he's fool enough to keep that location on him. He won't be the first man that's kind of dropped out of sight up here in the North."

Crowley shrugged: "That's your end of it," he answered, shortly. "My job starts where yours leaves off. An' there's reasons why I can't stick around till Boyne makes his strike."

"Yer huntin' me, hain't you? You could claim you couldn't find me till then."

"Gittin' your man is only half the game," answered Crowley. "I got to hit up to the coast an' git the evidence, too. But, you'll have company, all right."

"What d'you mean?" asked Nixon, quickly.

"Babcock's his name. He's up from the States, an' he's huntin' John Boyne."

"Where's he at? An' what's he huntin' him fer?"

"He's back here a couple of miles where we camped. He come on through with me. I didn't want to run onto Boyne's camp with him along so I be'n scoutin' ahead every day fer the last week, figgerin' I'd run onto you an' git this here business straightened out. He knows I'm huntin' you, an' that's the excuse I give fer scoutin' on ahead."

"What'n hell's everyone huntin' Boyne fer?" growled Nixon, surlily.

"Why, is anyone else huntin' him?" asked Crowley, quickly.

"Not as I know of," lied Nixon, "But, if they's one, they might be a dozen. What does he want of him?"

"Claims he's a friend of Boyne's," answered Crowley. "Claims he's worried on account he ain't heard from him fer a year. But——"

"But, what?"

"Oh, nothin'. Maybe I jest sort of imagined it. But, somehow, from little things he's let drop, now an' then, it seems like this here Babcock would sort of ruther find Boyne's remains, than Boyne himself."

Nixon's pale eyes glowed with sudden interest: "That so?"

"Well, I ain't sayin' it's so—but, that's the way it sort of looks to me."

Nixon shot a meaning glance into the officer's face. "It might be that the time'll come when it'll be well you should remember that. An' it better be a little stronger than jest, what you might say—a hunch."

"You mean——"

"I mean, that if Boyne happens to turn up

missin', an some party was roamin' around this here part of the country that folks know'd was sort of willin' he should be dead, it might be such a thing that the Mounted would kind of, mebbe, connect him up with the—murder."

Crowley winced visibly at the word, and Nixon grinned: "Hain't no harm in callin' a spade a spade, amongst friends."

"Damn it!" snapped Crowley, nervously, "You don't need to yell it out, do you? Anyway, that's your job. I've got to hit fer the coast. I'll leave Babcock with you. You got to keep him from findin' Boyne. An' it's up to you to leave a plain case agin' him. That is, if—anything should happen to Boyne. I'll slip back, now, an' tell him I located you, an' that you ain't workin' fer Boyne no more, but you know about where he's at. I'll tell him that I got you to agree to hire out to him as guide. An' that'll hold you where I kin find you when I come back from the coast with the evidence."

"Huh," grunted Nixon, "He'd know damn well I wouldn't stick around till you come back."

"You damn fool! I'll tell him, of course, that I didn't tell you you was wanted."

Nixon nodded thoughtfully, "Might work," he admitted, absently, with his thoughts far away

upon the Coppermine. A new fear had suddenly assailed him. Suppose on his journey to the coast Crowley should meet the girl? If he should go by way of the Coppermine, he would almost surely meet her. What then? Nixon suffered no delusions as to Crowley's feeling toward himself. He knew that so long as the officer had anything to gain by throwing in with him, just so long could he count on his assistance, and not one moment longer. But, if Crowley should meet the girl, and if he figured there was a chance to win her, he knew full well that the officer would do the obvious thing—would turn him, Nixon, in without batting an a eye, and if he married the girl, he would have Boyne's claim eventually, and all his other property beside. Aloud, he asked: "How you figgerin' on gittin' to the coast?"

"There's a river on ahead that will let me into Fish River, an' then I can go up the Icy an' portage over to the Coppermine."

Nixon laughed: "An' a hell of a ways around to git to where you're goin'."

"The Canadian Arctic Expedition is only a little ways from the mouth of the Coppermine, said Crowley. "That's the shortest way."

"Like hell it is! Look here, Crowley, I be'n in this country goin' on twenty-six years, an' I know

what I'm talkin' about. I know how you kin save two or three hundred miles of paddlin', an' a lot of it upstream. The Icy River is one hell of a job to go up it. An' if you hain't never be'n there, you'll sure take the wrong fork. Listen here. S'pose you hit this here river you was talkin' about that runs into Fish River, same as you was goin' to do. That's all downstream after you make the portage, hain't it? Well, then, when you hit the Fish River, instead of turnin' up the Icy, you keep on right down the Fish clean till you come to the big bend of Lake Beechy. There's a little river comes in there from the North. Go up it about fifteen miles till you come to a lake, an' from the north side of that lake it's only about a four-mile portage to the head of Western River. Then you foller down the Western straight into Bathurst Inlet. Downstream all the way, except about fifteen miles. An' besides you won't need to go clean to Bernard Harbor to connect up with the Ar'ticers. They've got a camp near the mouth of Hood River, an' that's where the *caches* is I robbed." As Nixon talked, Crowley had produced his map of the country, and he saw in a moment that the man spoke the truth.

"But, suppose there ain't no one at the Hood River camp?"

"Well, then all you got to do it to keep on west along the coast. You'll run onto some of 'em before you go many miles. An' even if you went the whole distance to their camp, it wouldn't be no further than to go by way of the Coppermine, an' a lot easier."

"Guess you're right," assented Crowley, folding his map. "Glad you happened to think of it. It sure saved me a lot of work. I'll be goin' back to camp, now. You better wait a couple of hours an' then come driftin' down, an' I'll make you acquainted with Babcock."

CHAPTER VII

A LITTLE SQUARE OF WHITE

THE vast expanse of Dease Bay, the northernmost reach of Great Bear Lake, lay flat as the surface of a mirror, its waters unbroken as far as the eye could see by even so much as a ripple. Gus Janier rested his paddle across the gunwales of his canoe, and as the light craft slipped smoothly through the water, the man's eyes roved in a slow arc. The widening V of his canoe-path caught the rays of the low-hung sun and reflected them in lights of red and gold.

In the bow the great Chesapeake dog, raised his head, yawned prodigiously, and resting his chin upon a gunwale, gazed dreamily through half-closed eyes. All the world—all the universe seemed to have lapsed into a state of suspended animation. In the crystal-clear water the slowly moving canoe seemed a detached thing—a thing suspended between earth and sky.

An all-encompassing sense of well-being warmed

the man's heart with a seeming of physical warmth. Perfect contentment—and, yet—no. Somewhere, deep within him, unfathomable, illusive, indescribable, was the longing. Times, and again he had felt it, yet never could his brain seize hold of it. In times of mighty silences, in times of whispering breezes, in times of moonlight, and of strong cold, and again in the crash and roar of the tempest it came—the longing, the intangible thing, that could be grasped neither by hand nor by brain. Now, it seemed the futile call of an imprisoned thing. Again, the vague groping to answer an illusive call from afar—from whence? From the depths of wide waters? From the naked coldness of high-flung peaks? From beyond the little stars? Gus Janier did not know.

The mood was strong upon him, as the canoe floated, motionless upon the still water—the undirectable urge to do—what? To go—where? Languidly, hopelessly, his brain groped for its answer, and its answer was—silence—mighty, vast, all-pervading. And yet, the silence itself was a state of mind, an impression, a silence only of seeming. To the physical ear came sounds—little sounds of the nightlife of the North. A feeding fish broke the water with a splashing swirl. Shoreward a little brook burbled noisily

over the spill-way of a beaver dam, and from the gloom of the pent-up waters beyond, came the sharp slap of a beaver's tail. From the marge of a tiny reed-choked bay came the guttural croak of a night-feeding wader, and as if in answer, the blatant quacking of a black duck. And above and beyond it all, as the theme and motif of the whole, sounded the high-pitched humming whine of a billion mosquitoes—monotonous, soothing—like the voice of singing wires.

His chin still resting on the gunwale, the great dog napped. His muscles twitched, and in his sleep he uttered a low, plaintive whine. Janier laughed, and picking up his paddle drove it deep into the water. "You feel it, too, don't you, Puk-puk?" he asked, addressing the animal as though he had been a human. "We'll be goin'. We'll catch us a fish and stop at the old fort an' cook some supper, an' then we'll shove on while the shovin's good. I don't like the looks of that red sun and this stillness. It's what the old-timers call a weather-breeder. An' I want to get off this big water before she kicks up. Old man Stull told me he was held up once for forty-three days by the wind at Cape MacDonnell. When the Great Bear growls, she growls big." With the canoe under way, the man paid out a trolling line, and ten

minutes later he got a strike. "Nice fish," he confided to Puk-puk, who watched with knowing interest, as the man drew the line in hand over hand, and flipped the thrashing trout inboard. A thrust with a knife which severed the spine at the base of the skull, stilled the fish, and Janier resumed his paddle. A mile farther on, the clearing of Old Fort Confidence came into sight. Puk-puk sniffed, his delicate nostrils quivering as they felt the air, and suddenly he turned and faced forward with ears a-cock. "What's the matter, Puk-puk—a bear?" The dog gave a low whine, "Oh, Injuns, eh." The gaunt chimneys were visible now, and at the base of one, Janier caught the flicker of a tiny fire. "Or, maybe the ghosts of old Dease, or Richardson, on the prowl." A few moments later the canoe was beached and Janier advanced toward the fire about which three dejected looking Indians huddled.

"*Klahowya six!*" he greeted, using the jargon, and then, recognizing one of them, "Hello, Chrysostom! *Mika Boston wawa.* (You speak English.) What you doin' here? An' where's your outfit?"

The Indians looked uneasily from one to the other. They knew this man, respected him mightily, and not a little, they feared him. Had it not been told upon the rivers how he had run the

Boiler Rapids in his canoe, and thus saved the life of Jacques Nedard, when the scow-men would have let him drown? And of how he had saved the life of a trader's Indian wife? And saved from starvation a whole camp of Slavis in the winter of the big snow which was also the year of the rabbit plague? But, also it had been told upon the river how he had followed the Indian, Adam Tache, who ran when his children were taken sick with the red death, and who put out no plague flag, but ran away to spread the red death throughout the North—of how this man Janier had followed him night and day until he caught him before he reached the river, and of how, although Adam Tache was a large man and strong, and fully armed, and with the fear of the red death in his heart, Janier had hurled himself upon him and had beaten him until Adam Tache had howled to be allowed to die mercifully by the hand of the red death, rather than by the two fists of Janier. Thus was Janier respected and feared even as the police —even more than the police, who may not beat the men whom they catch with their two fists.

Therefore the three Indians were uneasy. This man knew the North, even better than they, themselves, knew it. It would be very hard to lie to him. And—were they not running away?

Chrysostom spoke: "Com' to trade wit' Innuit. Los' canoe in rapids—*skookum chuck chuck*—she bus' all to hell." He pointed toward Dease River.

Janier laughed: "Try again," he said, "What you lyin' for? You never came up here for tradin'. You never came up here alone. And you never lost a canoe in any rapids on Dease River. You ain't the kind that would tackle a tradin' trip!" The smile changed swiftly to a frown: "Come on—out with it!" The three huddled together beyond the little fire, and blinked, dumbly. "Look here," cried the man, shaking his doubled fist before them, "I'm goin' to cook my supper, now. Before I get through, you're goin' to tell me the truth, or I'll pound your faces till no one could tell whether you're comin' or goin'." Deliberately, he turned his back and strode to the canoe, and when a few minutes later, he returned with his teapot and his frying pan, and half of his fish, the Indians were nowhere to be seen.

"Now, what the devil are they up to?" he muttered, as he snuggled his teapot into the coals, "They're up to some kind of deviltry, or they wouldn't have tried to lie about it. But where's their outfit? And what possible manner of deviltry could those sneakin' river Injuns be up to, way back here? If I wasn't in a hurry to get off this

lake, I'd follow 'em up an' find out. Wonder Old Downey didn't run onto 'em. He came along this way."

It was midnight when Janier again took his place in the canoe. He grinned at Puk-puk, who, with one ear cocked, glanced quizzically into his face. "Come on, jump in! I know it's high time we camped, but we'll just shove on, an' in a little while we'll hole up at Douglass's old cabin, if it hasn't burnt down."

The wisdom of Janier's course was soon apparent. A light breeze sprang up from the west, the sky became overcast, and hardly had the canoe entered the mouth of Dease River before the wind suddenly shifted into the southeast, and increasing to almost hurricane violence, drove before it a drizzle of fine, cold rain.

It was nearly noon when Janier awoke, drew on his clothing, and threw open the door of the cabin. The wind had died down somewhat, but the drizzling rain had turned to a steady downpour.

"We'll just hole up till she blows over, Puk-puk," confided the man, as he kindled a fire in the fireplace. "Couldn't have found a better place in a thousand miles. Nothin' to do but amuse ourselves, an' look at the walls all papered with magazine pictures! Look at that thing up there

over the bunk, with the string of dogs hitched to it! That, Puk-puk, is some alleged artist's idea of a trail outfit—about the only thing he's got right is the snow. The sled looks like a cross between a Russian drosky and a Venetian gondola, and those things the man has got strapped onto his feet are tennis rackets, and his whip is surely the property of a Government mule-skinner."

Breakfast over, Janier starting in one corner, began a methodical scrutiny of the wall pictures. Puk-puk stretched himself out on the floor for another nap, from which, an hour later, he arose, and began sniffing around the room on his own account. The dog sniffed about the floor, dropped onto his belly, and after some effort succeeded in pushing his head and shoulders beneath the bunk. When he backed out, a moment later he held between his teeth a small square of white. Janier was absorbed in the descriptive print beneath the picture of a new type of gold dredge, when a low whine from the dog attracted his attention. Puk-puk sat at his feet holding in his mouth the little square of white. The big Chesapeake, a splendid specimen of the greatest and most intelligent breed of natural retrievers the world has yet produced, had been carefully trained by his master during the three years of their inseparable companion-

ship in the far outlands, to search out any object that retained the human scent. Retrievable articles were brought to Janier, and Janier was promptly led to non-retrievable articles. It was thus that the man had located Nixon's hooch *cache* on Kazan River, and it was also thus that he had picked up a hundred and one uncorrelated scraps of information that had stood him in good stead, and had been no small factor in establishing his reputation as the best man in all the Candian North.

"What you got, Puk-puk?" asked Janier, taking the small square from between the dog's teeth and shaking out its folds. "Well, I'll be damned!" he muttered, as he raised the tiny square to his nostrils and inhaled the delicate scent that rose faintly from its fabric. "A lady's handkerchief! Who? What? When? Where? Why? Puk-puk, we've got some thinkin' to do—an' then a whole lot to do beside thinkin'." Carrying the handkerchief to the light, he studied it minutely. "B," he muttered, scrutinizing the initial worked into one corner. "To start out with, then, some lady whose first or last name begins with B has lost a handkerchief. Sherlock H. Janier! So far, so good—but, it ain't very far. What the devil would any lady who would pack a handkerchief

like this be doing on Dease River? It's the real thing in expensive material and workmanship—but about as useful for a handkerchief as a gun wad would be. What do those three Injuns know about this? I sure made a mistake when I didn't make 'em talk while I had the chance. Wish old Downey was here. I can't go in two directions at once."

Dropping onto his belly, he wriggled under the bunk and scratched a match. But his effort was rewarded only by the sight of neglected floor dirt, and crumbs of loosened wall-chinking. "Hasn't been here very long either," he muttered. "Puk-puk, let's go back to our five questions and take them one at a time. Who? Answer: Miss B, or Mrs. B. What? Answer: Lost a handkerchief—a lot more under this head, later. When? Answer: Not long ago. I should say within a week or two. Where? That means where is she now, Puk-puk? We'll have to carry that over. Why? We can't handle that one till we've found the answer to the one before it. My hunch says she's ahead of us. If she was behind us we would surely have seen her. . .unless. . .those Injuns knew something that they were anxious to keep from me. But, they wouldn't—go that far. Anyway, I can find 'em when I want 'em."

Seating himself on the edge of the bunk, Janier spread the handkerchief upon his knees and stared at it for fully five minutes. "If he'd run onto any white woman up here, Downey would surely have mentioned it. All he seemed to be thinkin' about was this man, Boyne. Boyne! B stands for Boyne! But—hell—this is no prospector's handkerchief—and he came in by way of the Bay, and he wouldn't be this far west."

Again he lapsed into a long silence, during which he went over almost word by word his conversation with the old police officer as nearly as he could remember it. "There's only one thing I don't savvy, an' that was his talk about rainbows an' pots of gold—an' that hunch he said he had that I was goin' to find somethin' over in here—at the foot of the rainbow. An' when I kidded him an' asked him if he meant gold, he said, 'No, my hunch don't say nothin' about gold.' A man can't always tell what's goin' on inside the old Corporal's head."

More silence, as Janier's brain groped futilely for the meaning of Downey's words. "By Jove!" he cried, suddenly, and raising the handkerchief from his knees, examined it even more closely. "Do you know, Puk-puk, we may be on the wrong track altogether. I've heard that way back—a long

time ago there was a girl. The old timers hint at it, now an' then—an' I guess some of 'em even know about it. There was a romance, or a tragedy, or somethin', and they sort of hint that it's got a lot to do with Downey's refusin' promotion. It's possible—just possible, Puk-puk, that there hasn't been any lady here at all—only old man Downey. He came along here a few days ago. Maybe he camped here, an' maybe, in the evening, when the fire burned low, and the red coals glowed in the fireplace, old Downey's thoughts wandered far, far away from the Dease River—travelling the long, long back-trail of the years. An', maybe—maybe he opened some old wallet, or some packet he's carried for years. Maybe there were letters—an' this." Again, the faint perfume wafted to his nostrils, and Janier smiled, and slowly shook his head: "No, Puk-puk. We're wrong. If old man Downey had packed this relic around with him since he was young enough for a romance, its edges would have worn thin, an' it would smell of tobacco, an' bacon, an' the smoke of little fires, instead of lilacs, or violets, or whatever this stuff is."

Carefully folding the handkerchief, he placed it in an inner pocket and taking a quick turn of the room, opened the door and stood peering out into

the rain. "*A bas*, dead romance of Downey!" he cried, addressing the dog, "We've got a romance of our own! Somewhere ahead of us there's a lady! Of course she may be behind us—but we're optimists, Puk-puk, you an' I, an' we've got a hunch that she's ahead. Just think of it, Puk-puk, a real lady! The mysterious Miss B. She might be Mrs. B.—but we're optimists, Puk-puk—so we'll call her Miss!"

At the moment, Janier was all French, imaginative, impulsive, light-hearted. On the trail he was Scotch—a most happy blending of qualities due to his mixed parentage. Among the outposts of the wilderness men discussed him much—practical, purposeful men, who deplored his seemingly aimless, and happy-go-lucky existence, and yet who secretly or openly believed with Black Andy Forgan, the old trader of Little Turtle, who had said: "Ye're all pratin' aboot th' lad singin' an' huntin', an' fishin' his life away—but, ye wait. I know um well, an' I'm tellin' ye true—when th' lad finds oot what it is he wants to do—he'll do ut —or he'll tear hell up be th' roots a-tryin'."

As he talked to his dog, Janier had thrown his outfit together, and before carrying it to the canoe, he glanced half-regretfully about the little room: "Only got half across one wall. Puk-puk,

why couldn't you have waited about finding that handkerchief till after I'd finished my readin'? Maybe the rain would have been over then, too. Common sense says to go on with the readin' an' wait till it stops rainin'—but, what's common sense against a hunch? Anyway, we've got to go, an' go now. It's important, Puk-puk. Maybe the lady needs help. An', maybe she don't. But chances are she'll get wet in this rain, an' take cold, an' then she'll need her handkerchief. Oh, it's a lovely summer, Puk-puk—a lovely summer! Behind us is civilization, an' old man Downey, an' three hungry Injuns sneakin' through the brush, an' ahead of us—Boyne, an' Nixon, an' the mysterious lady B! She's a beautiful lady, Puk-puk, the most beautiful lady we ever saw. We're optimists, Puk-puk! It's a good old world—best world we ever saw!"

"Come on—let's go!"

CHAPTER VIII

AN ISLAND CAMP

Derrière chez nous, il y a un étang
En roulant ma boule.
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant
En roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule.

Trois beaux canards s'en vont baignant.
En roulant ma boule.
Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant, ma boule roulant——

Gus Janier paused abruptly in the midst of the chorus of the old French *chanson de voyage*, and stared across the quarter of a mile of placid water of Providence Lake, toward a little island whose thick timbering of spruce showed almost inky black in the twilight—paused and listened spellbound to the voice that had taken up the refrain:

"*En roulant ma boule.*"

Wonderously clear and sweet the rich contralto strains floated out across the still water, and then ceased—seemingly swallowed up in the thick, velvety blackness of the timber. Seconds passed,

and the man made no move, his paddle trailing with just the suggestion of an audible ripple. Far away a loon laughed, the eerie, quavering sound, harshly discordant. From high above a bull-bat ceased his aimless wheeling to dive earthward with a resonant zoom, like the groan of a great base viol. In the bow of the canoe Puk-puk, his forefeet upon the gunwale uttered a low whine, and Janier, gripping his paddle, headed the canoe for the island.

Holding close in, the canoe glided around a rocky point, and upon the sheltered beach of a tiny cove, Janier caught the flicker of a camp fire, and the aromatic odor of burning spruce. A twist of the paddle and the light craft shot shoreward and beached beside another canoe, hauled half its length upon the shingle.

"Hello, Teddy!" called Janier, "What in thunder you doin' way over here? An' I never did know you could sing—like that!"

The Indian caught the twinkle in the man's eyes, and glanced toward the rocky point where a loose stone clattered noisily to the beach, as Irma Boyne clambered from her rocky perch and approached the fire. "And, I didn't know you could sing like that, either," she smiled frankly into the man's eyes.

"And I can't—like that!" Janier hastened to reply as with Stetson held lightly against his breast, he bowed low. "I assure you my poor effort is but a travesty upon the gentle art of melody—but, when the heart is light, one must sing."

"And, obviously, I am to disagree with you, and say that you have a really good voice—but I won't—even if you have, and I really enjoyed it immensely. I've heard you coming, for miles!"

"A recommendation that should prove of weight if I ever should change my mind and seek to join the Mounted," laughed the man, and turned to Teddy Bye and Bye, who still squatted before the fire: "Hey, you! Stand up on your hind legs and take off your hat and introduce me to the lady. Haven't you any regard for the fitness of things?"

The Indian grunted: "*Oui*, ma hat she feet, all right. I'm ain' savvy w'at you mean for mak' de laugh on me."

Janier laughed: "You must tell me the lady's name, and tell her my name, so that we may be properly introduced."

"W'at de matter you ain' kin tell you own nem'?"

Janier turned to the girl in mock gravity: "I am afraid," he said, "that our mutual friend, is going to totally fail us, in the matter of a formal

introduction. To meet the exigencies of the occasion we must resort to the unconventional. Behold, before you, and entirely at your service, Miss B, one Gus Janier, a ne'er-do-well, and an adventurer upon the edges of the world."

"You know my name?" asked the girl, ignoring the bantering tone as her eyes searched the man's face.

"I have not that pleasure. I merely hoped that you would give it in exchange for mine."

"But—you called me Miss B. My name is Boyne—Irma Boyne. Tell me, have your heard of me? Have your been following me? And if not, why Miss B? Why not, Miss X, as the algebras would say?"

"Algebra! Ah, my dear lady, why awake unpleasant memories? Can one never forget? But, let that pass. As I said I did not know your name. No one has spoken to me about you, and so we have been following you, Puk-puk and I, for many days."

Just a shade of annoyance had crept into the girl's tone as she asked the questions, but despite herself, she laughed: "Do put on your hat, please. And for heaven's sake be sensible, and stop talking in riddles." For the first time her eyes fell on Puk-puk, who at mention of his name had walked

over and taken his stand at his master's side. "What a wonderful dog!" she cried impulsively, and stretched out a white-brown hand, only to withdraw it with a jerk as she remembered the cry of quick warning that had greeted her similar attempt to caress a huge malamute at Fort Norman.

Janier smiled: "You may handle him without fear. Puk-puk is a perfect gentleman. I will vouch for him."

"And he for you?"

"Yes," answered Janier, gravely, "and he for me."

The girl's hand was stroking the great dog's head and shoulders. She leaned down and taking his head between her two hands gazed into the yellow eyes that glowed soft with amber lights. "A wonderful dog," she breathed, again, "How in the world do you ever protect him from those horrid fierce dogs that hang about the posts?"

Janier grinned: "Why, he sort of attends to that, himself. You see, Miss Boyne, in the jargon, *puk-puk* is the word for fight——"

"*Oui*," interrupted Teddy Bye and Bye, from beside the fire, "Dat Puk-puk she leek all de dog on de worl'. She ain' nev' start de fight, but she feenish it—you bet! Dat dog, she jus' lak Gus

Janier—she de bes' frien' de good mans got, but de bad mans dey 'fraid for heem, an' w'en he com' 'long dat bes' dey ron lak' hell. Me—I'm glad he com' 'long now—you bet. Com'—you git de suppaire now, Gus."

"Oh, do forgive me!" cried the girl, in a tone of evident solicitude, "It never occurred to me that you had not had supper!"

Janier laughed: "Nor to me. I am sure I had rather talk to you——"

"Not one word," smiled the girl, "until after you have eaten. You must be ravenous."

"Not at all. Puk-puk and I dined well at noon. Nevertheless, I'll not decline. But, won't you sit near and talk with me while I eat. I am not of those who regard a meal as a solemn sacramental rite to be observed in silence."

Irma Boyne laughed heartily. Since leaving Edmunton behind, almost without exception, the meals, both in posts and camps, had been occasions of funereal gravity for the sole and exclusive purpose of devouring food. Her few attempts to introduce a social note into the proceedings had been met with respectful silence, or at best with awkward, monosyllabic replies. It simply was not done. And the girl, broadened by contact with many and divers peoples, had accepted the custom

of the country as her custom, and respected it. But, here was a man of her own habit and custom. A man, evidently, of moods and whimsicalities. A man of education and culture. And, yet withal, essentially a man of the North, but a man apart from its commerce, its administration, and its customs. A man respected and feared by the dwellers beyond the outposts.

The girl seated herself beside him. Frankly she was interested in this man of whose unordered comings and goings she had heard much. "And, now," she began, "are you going to tell me why it is you have been following me if you never heard of me? And why you called me Miss B?"

"Certainly. The fact is, I found, or rather Puk-puk found, some property of yours, and I have been following you in order to restore it." As he spoke, Janier reached into his pocket and withdrew the handkerchief which he handed to the girl. "You will note, that the initial in the corner is B."

"That ridiculous handkerchief!" exclaimed the girl. "You must have thought its owner a fool! It got into my outfit by mistake, and I ran across it back in that cabin on Dease River and threw it away. You don't mean to tell me you have followed me hundreds of miles just to give me *this?*

And, how did you know that we had turned up the Coppermine, instead of down? Did you meet the Indians?"

"Yes, at old Fort Confidence, I met the three Injuns who deserted you at the mouth of the Kendall. They are having rather a rough time of it I fancy, making their way back to the Mackenzie a-foot, and unarmed. But they ran away before I could question them. The next day I found this in the cabin." He reached over and picked the handkerchief from her lap and carefully folding it, replaced it in his pocket: "Goods discarded upon the trail—not *cached* but discarded—by the custom of the country, become the property of the finder As I was saying, after finding the handkerchief, the rest was easy. I merely followed along—forcing the trail a little, to be sure, in hope of overtaking you."

"To restore my, er—property?"

"Yes—that—and, to see how you are faring."

"I'm very comfortable, thank you."

Janier was quick to catch the note of reserve in her voice: "Don't thank me. Thank Teddy Bye and Bye. Miss Boyne, you are fortunate in having picked up one of the best Injuns in the North."

"You said the three Indians ran away before

you could question them. How did you know they deserted us at the mouth of the Kendall?"

"Simplest thing in the world," smiled Janier, "A hard rainstorm had pretty well obliterated the sign around your camp sites until I crossed the Dismal Lakes divide. But at the mouth of the Kendall everything was plain as day. You camped between the two rivers, with your two canoes and four Injuns. While you were there a white man and an Eskimo came in an *umiak* and called at your camp. The white man was Amos Nixon. For reasons of his own he tried to stampede your Injuns, and succeeded in scaring three of them out of the country. This necessitated your *caching* one canoe, and the greater part of your supplies. Incidentally, I learned that you had outfitted at Fort Norman. The matter of determining that you proceeded up the Coppermine was simply one of noting that you had tracklined up the rapid a quarter of a mile above your camp." Janier paused and smiled, "So you must admit that there was nothing very extraordinary in the proceeding."

"But, I don't admit anything of the kind!" cried the girl. "For instance, how did you know that I didn't dismiss the Indians? And how did you know I outfitted at Fort Norman? And that the white man who came to our camp was Nixon?

And that his companion was an Eskimo, and that they came in a—what do you call those skin boats?"

"*Umiak*," answered Janier. "If you had dismissed your Injuns, they would have had an outfit to go back with, and they wouldn't have been afraid to stay and talk with me. As for the rest of it, it was even simpler. I know that Nixon is the only white man in the country who would rob a *cache*——"

"Rob a *cache!*" cried the girl, "You mean, my *cache?*"

"Yes, your *cache*. I knew it was a white man that robbed it, because he left a lot of wearing apparel that wouldn't fit him. Injuns or Huskies would have carried it off whether it fit or not. I knew you outfitted at Fort Norman because I saw the mark on some of the pieces. I knew Nixon's companion was a Husky, both by the tracks of his sealskin boots, and because they had an *umiak*, which they left at the *cache* when they took the canoe."

For an instant the girl's eyes flashed angrily, but the next moment she was smiling: "I don't care. Let him have the things—the supplies and the canoe. He probably won't stop till he gets clear to the coast, and I'll feel lots better to have that much distance between us."

This time Janier did not smile as he replied: 'That would have been better. Had he headed for the coast, *I* should not have hurried. But the fact is, Miss Boyne, Nixon did not head for the coast. He headed up the Coppermine. He followed behind you until Red Rock Lake was reached, and when you elected to skirt the southwest shore, he skirted the northeast. Amos Nixon is at this moment somewhere ahead of you."

The girl noted that the man's eyes were serious, and her own expression became grave: "Why is he ahead of us, Mr. Janier? I don't understand? What is he up to? He said he knows where my father is, and that I will never find him. Oh, is it possible that he would dare to—to harm my father?"

Janier sought to reassure her: "Undoubtedly not," he answered, "but the fact that he did follow you up the river, and then pass you at the first opportunity of doing so unobserved shows that he has something up his sleeve. And, what that something is, I am going to find out." The man arose, and stretched out his hand. "I am very glad to have met you, Miss Boyne. I must be going, now. We shall meet again, farther on, I trust. You spoke of your father, undoubtedly John Boyne, who is supposed to be prospecting

somewhere between the Coppermine and the Bay."

"Yes, yes!" answered the girl, quickly, "Do you know him?"

"No. Only know of him. He went into the country by way of Baker Lake, not long before I passed that way."

After a moment of silence the girl asked abruptly: "Mr. Janier, why are you here? Why were you on Dease River the day you found my handkerchief?"

The man smiled, and the girl was quick to note that he had slipped into his trick of whimsey: "Do you know, Miss Boyne, that for years I have been at my wit's end to know why I am any place, any time? Hunting, fishing, hunches—all play their part in the ordering of my comings and goings—the desire to see new places—or old—sometimes, just the trail itself."

She stepped forward and laid a hand upon his arm: "But, this time,—tell me, please. Was it a hunch? You said you knew that my father was somewhere here, and that you knew Nixon was here, too. Was it to find my father you were heading up Dease River?"

The eyes pleaded so earnestly that Janier dropped the lighter mood: "Well, I thought,

maybe I'd drift over this way and see how he was making it."

"And—after you found my poor little handkerchief, you hurried because of—me?"

"Yes," admitted the man. "Things didn't look just exactly right. You see, up here, we don't pick up handkerchiefs of that calibre every day—and the way those three Injuns acted, and then finding that Nixon was camping on your trail—yes, that is why I hurried. And now, I'll just slip on ahead and see what Nixon is up to."

"And, will you find my father? That man Nixon unintentionally dropped a word that leads me to believe he will be found in the Heywood Mountains."

"Sure, I'll find him," smiled the man, "But, if Nixon indicated he would be in the hills, that is the last place I shall look for him. Nixon don't drop words unintentionally, Miss Boyne. The words he drops are dropped with a purpose. Any message you want to send to your father?"

"No. I want to surprise him. He doesn't know I am here."

"I'll bet he doesn't," grinned Janier, as he stepped toward his canoe.

"But, surely, you're going to camp till morn-

ing!" exclaimed the girl, as he pushed the canoe into the water, "It must be nearly midnight!"

"Must be," assented the man, "And that'll give me a good early start. I won't wake Teddy up, but you tell him when he comes to Lac de Gras, that's the big lake next above this one, that he is to follow the north shore instead of the south. There's timber there in patches, and the south shore is mostly muskeg and mosquitoes. Camping places are hard to find. Tell him, also, that on Lac du Sauvage, he is to look for a peeled tree. The northern end of the lake lies up against the Heywood Range, but don't waste any time in the hills. At the northeast corner of the lake is the portage to the Icy River. It is to mark that portage I shall peel a tree. You are to descend the Icy and camp at its mouth on Fish River till I report to you there. Is that clear, Miss Boyne?"

"Perfectly clear."

"*Au revoir*, then!"

"*Au revoir!*" called the girl, softly, and "*bon voyage!*"

Janier waved his hat, and the next moment the canoe, with Puk-puk in the bow, disappeared from the tiny cove.

CHAPTER IX

A MILLION!

Gus Janier paddled steadily eastward, his tireless muscles working with the mechanical rhythm of long practice, his brain taking no note of miles nor of hours. Late in the forenoon he camped and cooked breakfast at the mouth of that section of the Coppermine that connects Lake Providence with Lac de Gras—a thirty-mile stretch, the ascent of which necessitates much track-lining and not a few portages.

The meal over he spread his bed, and for a matter of ten minutes lay still, with closed eyes. Then, to the vast surprise of the great dog that had stretched himself at the foot of the bed, he sat bolt upright: "Damnation!" he cried aloud, "What's the matter with me? I ought to be sleepy— I *am* sleepy! An' it's the first time in my life I couldn't go to sleep when I wanted to. It just goes to show, Puk-puk, that a man dies hard.

You don't know what I've been thinkin' for the last six or seven hours, because I haven't told you —I was ashamed to tell you, I guess. I'm ashamed to tell you now— but I'm goin' to. It'll do my own ears good to hear it. Gus Janier's dead, Puk-puk—an' the man that will answer to his name from now on is a damned cad!" Janier paused and laughed, mirthlessly, "You don't savvy, do you, Puk-puk? I'll tell you about it. I've always figured that some day I'd do something big—something worth while, so I've passed up the little jobs, and just sort of kept travelin'—lookin' for the one big thing that I wanted to do. The belief that some day I would find that thing, and would accomplish it after I'd found it, has kept me goin' on, an' on, an' on. Then, there was the other—the mysterious, illusive call that I never could understand. It was weird an' mystic, an' it added a tang and a zest to life. I know, now, what it was—and I know, now, that I never will hear it again. Its swan song was in the rich, clear voice that floated out to us last night across the water from the little spruce-covered island. It was the sex-call, Puk-puk—the unutterable longin' of a man for his mate. It was love. It came to me, partly when I heard that voice—an' when I looked into her eyes, I knew. There it

was—the thing that has been always callin', callin'—I could see it at last far in the depths of those dark eyes.

"It wasn't just because she's a woman, Puk-puk—any woman. I've known hundreds of women in Montreal, Winnipeg, the settlements—beautiful women, women of education, an' of charm. But not *that woman!* I knew her the moment I saw her—for I have known her since time began. My woman, Puk-puk—mine. And then, I learned her name. If I'd never learned her name, Puk-puk, or had never met old man Downey on the river—Oh, God! If I never had! I'd give worlds if I never had! For, then I'd still be a man. But, I did meet old Downey—an' I did learn her name—an' there's where the devil came in. 'Cleaned up a million in the Klondike,' Downey said about old Boyne. An', those were the words that leaped into my brain, the moment she told me her name. 'It's your *big thing*,' whispered the devil. 'It's what you've been lookin' for for years—a million—a million—a million!' I've tried to forget it. But, it always pops up. I've even gone so far as to figure what we could do with our million. For, I'm going to marry her, Puk-puk, if I can. So, Gus Janier is gone, Puk-puk—sold for a stinkin' million. An' now, since you know what

sort of a cad you've thrown in with, we'll just turn in an' get some sleep. We need sleep now. We're sittin' in a big game, an' we've got to keep our head. There's a million at stake, you know, Puk-puk—a million!"

A week later Janier's canoe shot from the mouth of the Icy River into the broader current of Back's River, and almost at the same instant, the eyes of Puk-puk and his master caught a tiny thread of smoke that rose above the tops of a clump of stunted spruce on the opposite shore.

As the canoe beached a man stepped from the timber. The man was Constable Crowley. Was it a trick of sunlight? Or, did a glance of hate flash from the officer's eyes as the other stepped from his canoe. If so, it was gone in a moment. Crowley greeted him with a show of friendliness: "Hello, Gus! What you doin' over in here?"

"Hello, Crowley. Fishin'. What you doin'?"

The officer knew that the reply had been a studied insult, yet he chose to ignore it, as his only chance to learn of the other's movements lay in further conversation. And Janier's movements during the next few weeks, might well be a matter of extreme importance to Crowley. He laughed: "Always kiddin', Janier—that's you. But, now you're here you might as well stop fer a

bite. Grub'll be ready as quick as the tea boils I'll throw on some more bacon."

Janier followed into the timber and both seated themselves at the fire, where Janier rolled a cigarette, while the constable sliced the bacon. "I've got a hell of a job," he confided, as the bacon sizzled in the pan.

"An' not much pay," grinned Janier.

"Ain't that the truth! But that ain't what I mean. I'll be well out of that, come fall. I'm goin' to take my discharge. I mean this here patrol I'm on now—clean to the coast after evidence agin Nixon fer robbin' some Canadian Ar'tic *caches*."

Janier nodded. "I heard about it, over on the Mackenzie. They ain't sendin' out any long patrols over there. They're just layin' low, knowin' Nixon'll show up somewhere after supplies. Then they'll nab him."

"The hell they will!" grinned Crowley, "If they set around waitin' fer him to show up on the Mackenzie, they'll wear the seats out of their britches, an' not git Nixon, neither. He's my meat."

"Got him located, eh?" smiled Janier, "Well, cocky, Nixon's pretty sharp in his way. I've known him to give a *good* man the slip, an' not

only that, but a couple of days later he stole the evidence that was to be used against him. I'd say if you're so hell-bent on bringin' Nixon in, you overlooked your best bet when you let him get away with that hooch *cache* I found over on the Kazan."

Crowley frowned: "It had be'n moved a couple of days before I got there."

"Where to?"

"How the hell do I know?" flashed the officer, angrily. "If I'd know'd where he moved it to, I'd of gone an' got it, wouldn't I?"

"I expect you would, Crowley. I mean, I suspect you did." As he spoke, Janier reached out and drew a flat pint bottle from the officer's duffle bag. The bottle was nearly empty, and drawing the cork he sniffed at the contents. "How long since the Mounted's been issuin' rot-gut for rations?"

Crowley's face flushed crimson, as he glared wrathfully across the fire. For an instant it seemed that he would hurl himself upon the man, who apparently unheeding, recorked the bottle and returned it to the duffle bag with a grin. Crowley forced a laugh: "It's agin orders, I know," he said, "But, I like a little drink, now an' then, same as anyone else. It's a damned lonesome job, up here,

an' a little drink helps out. You ain't the kind to squeal a little thing like that. But, you're dead wrong about where it come from. That ain't no liquor out of Nixon's *cache*. Babcock give it to me."

"Who's Babcock?" asked Janier.

Crowley hesitated. In his momentary confusion over being caught with liquor from Nixon's *cache* in his possession, by this man who, he knew, stood high in the estimation of his superior officers, he had seized upon the first excuse that presented itself. He even wished for a moment that he had not spoken. Then all of a sudden, it flashed upon him, that instead of a menace to the plans of himself and Nixon, Janier's presence in the country might be made to play directly into their hands. If Janier should come across Babcock, and should get the impression, as he, Crowley, had got it, that Babcock would not be particularly grieved over Boyne's death, then, if in order to obtain the location record, Nixon were forced to kill Boyne, Janier would become a very valuable witness in helping to fix the crime upon Babcock. Or, better yet, things might break so the crime could be fastened upon Janier, himself! The officer adroitly covered his period of thought by dividing the bacon, and pouring Janier a cup of tea. "Bab-

cock?" he repeated, as the two settled themselves to the meal. "Oh, he's some feller from the States that's up here huntin' Boyne."

"What does he want of Boyne?" Janier asked, without show of interest.

"Well, he *claims* he's a friend of his'n. An' bein' as he ain't heard from Boyne fer better'n a year, he come up to see if he's all right."

"Quite a little trip," opined Janier, "Where did you run onto him?"

"I didn't run onto him. He come along to detachment headquarters, with the Churchill patrol, just before I was leavin' for here, so they sent him along with me. I was to see that he got a guide that would take him to Boyne, an' then go on after Nixon. Me an' him got pretty friendly on the trail. That's how come he give me the liquor. But, I'm tellin' you, if he's a friend of Boyne's—I don't want no friends, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"Well—the way I got it doped out. He never said nothin'—not in so many words, you understand—but from what he let drop, now an' then—the kind of questions he'd ask, an' all—I kind of figgered he'd ruther find good an' sufficient proof that Boyne was dead, than to find him alive, an' kickin'."

"Why?"

"Damned if I know. I didn't ask him no direct questions. Maybe he's Boyne's relation, an' there's a will, or somethin'. They say Boyne's rich. It wasn't none of my business. If Boyne's dead, he's got a right to find proof of it. But, what I was thinkin' mostly about was, if Boyne ain't dead—yet. An' someone else finds proof that he was killed—I'd know who to go after—see?"

"Yes," answered Janier, "I see. An' did you find a guide for Babcock?"

Crowley grinned: "I'll say I did. Killed two birds with one stone. I was scoutin' ahead one day, tryin' to locate a native, while Babcock was layin' in camp, an' I run plumb onto Nixon hisself. Nixon knows about where Boyne's at. He guided Boyne fer a while, till Boyne fired him. So I took Nixon back to camp, an' Babcock hired him fer a guide."

"Thought you were supposed to bring Nixon in."

"I'll bring him in, all right, when I git ready. It wouldn't do no good to bring him in without no evidence. I worked it so I'll know where Nixon is till I come back with the goods on him."

"Pretty smooth, ain't you, Crowley?" grinned Janier, "It's too bad you're goin' to take your

discharge when your time's up. The Mounted'll miss you. They ain't got another just like you in the whole service."

"What d'you mean?" asked the officer, an angry flush reddening his cheeks.

"I mean, I'm wonderin' if there is any such person as Babcock."

"Hell! I jest got through tellin' you about him!"

Janier nodded. "That's why I'm wonderin'."

"Do you mean, you think I'm lyin'?"

"No, not that. I don't think you're lyin'. I know it. If there isn't any Babcock, it's plain you got that liquor out of Nixon's *cache*. If there is a Babcock, it's plain you got that liquor out of Nixon's *cache*, just the same. Because a man like this Babcock wouldn't be packin' that kind of liquor."

The Constable was upon his feet, his fists clenched: "You think you're God awful smart, Janier! But listen—you ain't up in this country fer nothin'! An' if it turns out an' somethin' should happen to Boyne—Babcock ain't the only one that'll be gathered in—by a damn sight! They's plenty of folks in the North wonders how you make yer livin', as it is."

Janier laughed: "An' you're the only one of the

whole damned mess of 'em that knows I've got independently rich murderin' prospectors, ain't you, Crowley? What? You ain't goin' away mad, are you?"

Crowley had gathered his duffle into his arms and was striding toward his canoe. "You go to hell!" he called, as he pushed out into the current, "I'll see you later—an' when I do, you'll wisht to God I hadn't!"

CHAPTER X

AT THE MOUTH OF THE ICY

THE brain of Amos Nixon, was a brain not without its certain degree of cunning. But, it was a simple, direct cunning which abhorred complexities. When the Mounted had taken over the policing of the Mackenzie River district and the Arctic coast, Nixon had straightway abandoned those haunts of his earlier traffic, because of the complexities that immediately assailed his simple system of *hooch* and *klooch* trading among the natives and the whalers that wintered in the ice-locked Beaufort Sea. In the vast, and little explored territory between the Coppermine and the Bay, he had since eked out a precarious existence with his traps, and an occasional batch of liquor. But even upon this domain the Mounted was beginning to encroach. A detachment had erected permanent quarters on Baker Lake and gradually unknown and little known tribes of natives were coming under the benevolent dominion of the law.

Nixon growled and cursed as he realized that the days of his illicit trading were numbered. Indeed, but for his almost unbelievable luck in running into the only moral weakling in the Service, his latest venture in *hooch* running would have been his last.

The coming of Boyne had suddenly opened a new possibility. Here was a proposition that appealed to the simple cunning of his brain. He had merely to wait until Boyne made his strike and then to obtain the location, and knowing the country, to beat Boyne to the recorder. Later Boyne would "put up a howl." But he could prove nothing. If the secret could not be filched, then, so much the worse for Boyne. Dead men tell no tales, and in the vastness of the wilderness, any chance of Boyne's demise ever being laid at his door was remote in the extreme, and with the help, or at least, the connivance of Crowley, was an absolute impossibility.

If Boyne made no strike, the wages he paid Nixon as guide, would suffice his needs until something else turned up. To Nixon's mind the plan was beautifully simple. Then, came complexities. Boyne discharged him. It therefore became necessary for him to obtain supplies so that he might stay in the country and keep his eye on the

prospector. He hit North, and on Bathurst Inlet, found and robbed two *caches*, whereat he returned and for five or six months, spied on Boyne.

Again it became necessary to secure supplies, and with the money Boyne had paid him, he hit out down the Coppermine intending to purchase them from Joe Bernard on the coast. Luck again favored him, for the contents of Irma Boyne's *cache* saved him a trip to Bernard's, where he would have been promptly arrested for the *cache* robberies, which had already been laid at his door.

The coming of the girl into the North, however made his simple problem more complex—and now, the coming of Babcock further worried him. Convinced as he was, that Boyne was even now upon the eve of making his strike, the last thing in the world that Nixon wanted was to be burdened with Babcock. But there was nothing else to do, for he could not have Babcock trailing around with a native guide hunting for Boyne. He might find him. Then, there was another thing—suppose the girl did not stay and search for her father in the Heywood Hills? She had maps. Suppose she should cross the divide and venture down the Icy River, and then— Cursing his luck, Nixon wrestled with his problem as he paddled down the

Thelon to the camp where Crowley and Babcock awaited him.

Nixon readily came to terms with his new employer, and immediately after the noonday meal, Crowley pulled out. Whereupon, Nixon discharged his Husky by the simple method of accusing him of theft and kicking him out of camp.

Babcock, puffing at his pipe watched the proceeding, and grinned: "You seem to be a man of decision and of action, ah—Nixon. I hope you will be as successful in leading me to my old friend, John Boyne."

Nixon knocked the damp tobacco from the bottom of his pipe bowl into his palm, half-filled the bowl with fresh tobacco, crammed the dottle on top of it, and lighted it with a brand from the fire: "Um-hum," he answered, between audible puffs, "I'll find him, all right. But, it might take time."

"How much time?" asked the other rather abruptly, his eyes on Nixon's.

"Well, that's accordin'. This here's a big country. He might be within two miles of us, right now, an' he mightn't be within two hundred."

"The officer gave me to understand that you knew where he is. He said you were employed by him until recently.

"Yup—'bout six months ago. But quite a bit

of water's went down stream sence then. An' this here Boyne hain't what you'd call no permanent settler nowheres. He's considerable on the move. Last time I seen him he hadn't tuk rut yet. An' I guess he won't till he makes his strike, er dies."

A few moments of silence followed as Babcock apparently pondered the words. "Do you know that's a thought that of late has caused me many a sleepless night—the thought that possibly my old friend was in trouble of some kind—dying, possibly—even dead, way up here in this awful wilderness. When more than a year passed without word from him I could stand it no longer, so I came in search of him."

"Quite a little trip. But if I was you I wouldn't lose no sleep over it, till you find out if it's true. Maybe he is, an' maybe he hain't."

"You don't know what a relief it is to me to know that at least up until within the last six months, he was alive and well. He was well, wasn't he?"

"Hum-m, yup. Feelin' pretty good most of the times. When one of them spells would hit him he'd lay around fer a day an' then he'd be all right agin."

"What spells?" asked Babcock, with an eager

alacrity that somehow, did not correlate with the man's previous expression of solicitude.

Nixon was checking up on Crowley's estimate of the man. "Hum-m," he mused, groping in his mind for words to describe the "spell," and alighting upon the symptoms that had preceded the death of a whaling captain years before, off Herschel Island. "Well, seemed like he kind of got the staggers, like dogs gits sometimes. He claimed things kind of turned black, like. An' then he'd git dizzy, an' stagger, an' like as not fall down, an' his head would start in achin', an' he'd git sick to his stummick."

"Were these attacks frequent?"

"Well, they come about onct in so often."

"But, suppose, with nobody to help him, during one of these attacks he should happen to fall over a precipice, or into the river, or should even hit his head on a rock."

"Well, he'd be out of luck, then," answered Nixon, philosophically.

"Poor John. My poor old friend," muttered Babcock. "And to think that even now it may be too late! Is he alone, Nixon—quite alone?"

"No, not quite. He's got an Injun with him."

Babcock knocked the ashes from his pipe and abruptly rose to his feet: "Come on," he ex-

claimed, "let's be going! You say he may be within two miles of us. Why, we may find him this very afternoon!"

Nixon shook his head: "No, we mightn't. They's more to this here business than jest shovin' around the country on the chanct of runnin' acrost him. What we got to do is figger. The last time I seen him was forty, fifty mile northwest of here, an' he was workin' west along the ridges. You better rig up that there fishin' pole an' see if you can't snag us a mess of fish fer supper, while I kind of run back in my head about the ground we covered while I was workin' fer him. Me, knowin' the country like I do, I'd ort to be able to sort of dope out where he'd prob'ly fetch up at by this time."

Babcock readily assented, and a few minutes later Nixon sat with his back propped against a rock, and smoked as he watched the man take up his position on a gravel bar and whip his fly out over the water.

Nixon had spoken the truth when he told Babcock he must "figger." But, his "figgering" was not exactly along the indicated line. Instead, he faced the problem of keeping both the girl, and Babcock from finding Boyne, without himself getting so far away that he could not spy upon the

prospector. As a matter of fact, Nixon, had he so desired, could have led Babcock straight to Boyne's camp on a nameless creek among the ridges some sixty miles to the southwest. But he had no intention of leading Babcock to Boyne's camp—now, nor at any other time. When Boyne should locate his claim, he Nixon would swoop down upon him, get the location, and leaving Babcock wherever he chanced to be, would immediately strike out to find Crowley.

The result of an hour's cogitation was a plan to lead Babcock northwestward to the mouth of the Icy River, and there to establish a permanent camp where he could leave Babcock while he scouted the country, obviously in search of Boyne. A camp at the mouth of the Icy would give him the double advantage of being able to keep track both of Boyne and the girl, without being near enough to either to endanger their discovery by Babcock in event of his making excursions on his own account. The plan looked simple. Nixon thought it would work. He went over it, and over it again. He began to regard himself largely as a man of brains. Reluctantly, he admitted two or three minor mistakes in his career, such as getting himself discharged by Boyne, and robbing the Arctic Expedition's *caches*, and failing to scare the girl

out of the country; but his present plan rendered these of no moment. Of course, he would now have to take Crowley into partnership, but later there would be plenty of time to attend to Crowley.

When Babcock returned with a half-dozen fish, Nixon greeted him in a manner that contrasted sharply with the rather lugubrious mood he had associated with his new guide: "Well, I'll be damned if I thought you could ketch fish of them size on that there spindlin' lookin' pole. Looks like a minnie would break it. Only other feller I ever seen pack a pole like that is Gus Janier, an' him an' me never stayed around the same place long enough so's I know's what size fish he ketched on it."

"Who is Gus Janier?" asked Babcock, without particular interest.

"Oh, he's a feller. His dad was a Company factor, but Gus, he don't do nothin', leastwise nothin' no one knows about, except huntin' an' fishin'. He don't make no livin' at that, though—an' he's always got money to buy what he wants."

"Sort of a free lance adventurer, eh?"

"I don't know nothin' about that," said Nixon with a show of interest, "Is it agin the law? 'Cause if it is I'll slip the word to the Mounted an' they kin put him where he b'longs. I'm tired of

havin' him sneakin' around the country squealin' on honest folks that's mindin' their own business."

"No," laughed Babcock, "I guess they couldn't hold him for that. But, tell me, have you figured out where we shall find my friend, Boyne? You seem to be in better spirits than you were."

"Figgered it all out," answered Nixon, with the air of a man to whom such matters are mere trifles, "Pays to figger. We might of went on shovin' back'rd an' for'ad through the country all summer an' never run onto Boyne. But an hour's figgerin' saved us mebbe it's a month or so of trailin'. It's a good thing you run onto me instead of some damn Husky or Injun. They're all right in their way, but it takes a white man to figger.

"You talk," smiled Babcock, "as though you expected to walk right into his camp."

"Pretty near it. We'll camp where the Icy runs into Fish River. Then all you got to do is set tight, while I projeck around. He won't be fer from there, an' I'll find him."

"But, suppose I don't want to sit tight. I'd much rather project around with you."

"Sure—suit yourself. It don't make no difference to me. Only, I kind of figgered the trailin' would kind of git you—you not bein' use' to it."

Babcock grinned. He was a large man, who rather prided himself on his muscular development. "I'll take a chance," he said, eyeing the rather sparse frame and sallow complexion of his guide.

"That's good," answered Nixon, "Sooutin' around's kind of lonesome work. It'll be better with two."

From the big bend of the Thelon to the mouth of the Icy is seventy-five miles, as the crow flies. As Constable Crowley made it, by canoe, with one four-mile portage, it is probably a hundred miles. And as Nixon and Babcock now made it, by canoe, also, it was about one hundred. But, Nixon deliberately chose a route, that was fraught with almost every known hardship of the trail. There were portages that necessitated dragging the outfit over rocky ridges, and portages that necessitated wading waist-deep in slough and muskeg. There were wet camping places and fireless camps. At the end of the second day Babcock showed signs of weakening. At noon of the third day he insisted upon a two-hour rest. And that evening he could scarcely drag himself to the camp site from utter body-weariness. Nixon was, apparently, as fresh as when he started.

"How much farther is it?" groaned Babcock, from his blanket, as Nixon cooked supper.

"We'll git there tomorrow noon, if we're spry," replied the guide cheerfully, "An' then we'll make camp an' hit right out to hunt fer Boyne."

"You will, you mean," snapped Babcock, rolling over in a vain attempt to ease his aching hips and back and shoulders. "When I get to that camp I don't budge an inch out of it for a good week. I'm all in. I don't see how you stand it."

"Jest gittin' use' to it, I guess," answered Nixon. "I've kind of laid off travelin' fast these last couple days, 'cause I figgered you'd kind of better take it easy. When we git to projeckin' around after Boyne, we'll do some real trailin'."

"*We* will, like the devil! You'll do the trailing, an' I'll hold down the camp."

"You're the boss," said Nixon, "I'd like to have you go 'long. But, it won't make no difference, I'll find him, an' then we kin slip over to his camp any time you feel like it."

So furiously had Nixon forced his hard trail that Constable Crowley with his half-day's start, and his infinitely easier trail, had only just left the mouth of the Icy River, when the canoe bearing Nixon and Babcock rounded a bend of the Fish and came full upon a canoe beached upon the sand before a small thicket of spruce. Now, a canoe was the last thing Nixon wished, or ex-

pected to find at the mouth of the Icy. Babcock saw it, too, and gave a quick order to land. Nixon, perforce, turned the bow shoreward, and as it touched the sand, a man stepped from the thicket. The man was Gus Janier.

CHAPTER XI

BABCOCK STAYS IN CAMP

In the short space of time it took Babcock to step from the bow of the canoe to the beach, a volley of questions shot through Nixon's brain. By what route had Janier come into the country? Had he seen the girl? What was he doing here? Before Nixon stepped from the canoe Babcock was introducing himself: "How do you do, sir? Babcock is my name—Warren Babcock, of New York City." He paused and Janier answered with a grin: "I'm Gus Janier, post-office unknown. Welcome to our expansive, but not over populous community!"

"Thank you," retorted Babcock, with a supercilious air, "I hope you will pardon me for saying, however, that it is the most damnably disagreeable country it has ever been my misfortune to see. Mosquitoes, flies, rocks, and muck, with rivers and lakes wedged in every which way without rhyme or reason. How in the devil anybody

would live in such a place from choice is entirely beyond me."

"Quite, I should say," answered Janier, dryly.

For an instant their eyes met, and Babcock turned abruptly to Nixon: "Step lively, now, Nixon, and get us something to eat. I'm starved!" The tone was domineering, and he added, with a swagger: "Enough for three, Nixon, if Mr.—er—Janvers will join us."

"Janier," corrected the man who listened with a half-concealed grin, "An', Nixon, don't bother about me. I've eaten. You'll find a fire in there."

When Nixon had disappeared into the timber with a load of duffle, Babcock again addressed Janier: "My good man, you seem to be a bright fellow, and more or less familiar with the country hereabouts, can you give me any information as regarding my old friend, John Boyne?"

"Well, Mr. Hitchcock——"

"Babcock!"

"As I was goin'on to say, inasmuch as personal observations are in order, what you lack in apparent brightness is more than made up in bluff and bluster. The only information I can give you at present concerning John Boyne is that he is devilish careless in his selection of friends."

"What do you mean, young man?"

Janier grinned: "Any misunderstandin' which may arise between us through any ambiguity in any statement of mine, Mr. Glasscock——"

"Babcock, damn it! Babcock! B A B—bab!"

"Excuse me—Babcock. As I was sayin', any such misunderstandin' may be referred for arbitration under the regulations of the British Arbitration Act, of 1889——"

"Look here! Who the devil are you, anyway?"

"Gus Janier."

Babcock realized that here was a man whose wits were more than a match for his own, and the thought angered him. He quickly controlled his anger, however, even forced a smile: "I say, pardon me, will you, if I seemed a trifle—er—brusque. My association lately has been with muckers like him," he jerked a thumb in the direction of the thicket into which Nixon had disappeared, "and I naturally formed the opinion that they were the type of the—er, inhabitants of the country. I certainly didn't expect to find a man here of, well, you know—of my own kind."

"You won't be disappointed," answered Janier, and before Babcock could reply, Nixon's voice sounded from the thicket.

"Grub's ready!"

"If you won't join us in a meal, at least you will stay and chat a while, won't you?" asked Babcock.

"Oh, yes. I'm not in any great hurry," and Janier followed Babcock into the timber.

"You don't know where Boyne is, do you?" asked Babcock, between mouthfuls.

"Haven't the least idea in the world. Nixon ought to know, if anyone does."

"I hain't saw him fer goin' on six months," growled the man, "Last time I seen him he was east of here workin' west."

"He's probably up in the Heywood Hills, then," ventured Janier.

"That's the way I figger it," retorted Nixon, with alacrity. "That's why I brung Babcock over here, so's I could scout around amongst the hills huntin' him."

"I must find him at all costs," interrupted Babcock, pulling a long face. "Poor John. It has been more than a year since we have had word of him, and at times, I fear the worst."

"He may be dead, though. You can't tell," observed Janier.

"That, of course is what I fear. Accident, misadventure, or disease—Nixon tells me he was subject to curious attacks of dizziness or blindness, accompanied by headaches and nausea. These

symptoms he has developed since coming North. I certainly should have known it had he developed any such disorder in New York."

"Most likely," agreed Janier, "An' what is it you want of him when you find him?"

"Why—nothing—that is—I have for some time been apprehensive for his safety. Of late this apprehension had developed into a real worry. If I find him alive, the mere fact of finding him alive will amply repay me for my journey. If he is not alive, it becomes my sacred duty to establish the fact of his death. He has a daughter, an only child, and as executor under his will, it is my duty to safeguard her interests."

"Pretty well fixed, ain't he?" asked Janier.

"Oh, yes," answered Babcock with an air of indifference, "Not what you'd call wealthy, but comfortably well off. Cleaned up a matter of a million or so in the Klondike, and I believe he has invested it to fairly good advantage."

"An' this girl—this daughter of his—she'll inherit all his property?"

"Exactly. Only, not by any means in a lump sum. John Boyne was too wise a man to risk the dumping of any considerable property suddenly upon a young person of immature judgment. So he drew a will by the terms of which I

am to manage, or administer this property until she arrives at the age of thirty."

Janier nodded, slowly: "I see. When she's thirty, she gets what's left after you've had the handlin' of it. An' I suppose she's worryin', too, about her dad?"

"No. Why should she worry? She had every confidence in her father's ability to take care of himself under any circumstances. And she knows that I have come up here to search for him."

"Off hand, I'd say, she'd be the one to worry. But that's neither here nor there. As a matter of fact, I'm huntin' Boyne, myself. Maybe we can work together."

"You!" exclaimed Babcock, in a tone in which annoyance battled against surprise. Beyond the fire Nixon spoke no word, but Janier caught the expression of blended rage and fear that seemed to sweep the man's features, and center itself in the narrowing gleam of the pale eyes.

"Yes, me. An' I'm glad you two happened along. I would have gone on and wasted a lot of time to the eastward. But now we know that he is in the Heywoods, it won't take long to locate him."

"But—why are you searching for Boyne? Do you know him?"

"Never laid eyes on him," answered Janier, evenly. "I promised his daughter I'd try to find him."

For an instant Babcock stared, speechless. When he found words there was no attempt to conceal the arrogance of his tone. "Come, out with it! Who are you? And where did you meet Miss Boyne?"

Janier smiled, a slow, irritating smile: "You forget that I don't know any more about you than you do about me. So, if I replied that it was none of your damned business, you'd get a proper answer."

"Irma Boyne in the North! Impossible! Preposterous! Why, I—she—I left her in New York not more than two months ago!"

"She wasn't bedridden, or in jail, was she?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, she was as free to move about as you were, wasn't she?"

Babcock made no effort to control his anger. He leaned forward and shook his gloved finger in Janier's face: "Look here, young man. I'll tell you who I am mighty quick. I'm the best friend John Boyne's got. I've told you that, and also that I am the executor of his will. I may further

add that at no distant date I shall be his son-in-law! Possibly that fact will establish my right to know the whereabouts of Miss Boyne!"

"It might!" admitted Janier, with studied insolence, "if you had the papers for it."

"Do you mean that you doubt my word?"

"I mean," replied Janier, meeting the blazing eyes squarely, "That I shall know the name of John Boyne's future son-in-law, when I hear it from the lips of Miss Boyne, herself."

Babcock's answer was a sneering laugh: "O—ho! So that's your game! You poor fool! You insolent puppy! Do you think for a minute that Miss Boyne would look twice at a man like you? A worthless vagabond! A half-civilized bush ranger! So that's the reason you were so solicitous as to John Boyne's financial standing? Really, if it were not so amusingly ridiculous, I should be very angry."

"Don't get angry," advised Janier, soothingly, "Stick to the ridiculous. A sense of humor is a great thing. Mine is at this very moment saving you great bodily pain."

All during the conversation Janier had been thinking rapidly. He was convinced that Nixon knew exactly where to find Boyne, and that his real purpose in acting as guide to Babcock was to steer him

as far away from Boyne as possible. Also it was evident that Babcock was anxious to find Boyne, and as Crowley had said, it was equally evident that he would much prefer to find him dead than living. They were working at cross purposes, with Nixon by far the more dangerous of the two. At all costs he must keep an eye on Nixon—but how? Suddenly a plan occurred to him that would at once force Babcock's hand, and leave him free to watch Nixon. By tomorrow Teddy Bye and Bye and the girl should be on Icy River!

Ignoring Babcock, he addressed the guide: "Say, Nixon, if Boyne's in the Heywoods, we could save a lot of time huntin' him if you two would shove on up the Icy an' start in an' work east through the hills an' I'll slip down an' start in at the east end of the hills, an' work west. What do you say?"

He had expected Nixon to fall in with the plan, but he had hardly expected such enthusiastic approval as the man now voiced: "That there's the thing to do!" agreed the guide. "It's jest what I an' him had figgered on doin', only with me workin' the hull line of hills it would of took twict as long. Only we kin make better time yet if he stays here like we had it figgered. He's about wore out an' he couldn't hardly stand forcin' no trail. Me an'

you workin' from both ways, we'd ort to come together in somewheres around ten days."

"Better make it two weeks," grinned Janier. "There's quite a bit of territory to cover."

"Well, mebbe two weeks, at the outside. I'm figgerin', though, we'd ought to be back here, an' Boyne along of us, in two weeks. Might's well hit out right now, too. Hain't nothin' in layin' around camp."

Janier grinned: "Suits me. I have no desire to stay here. Wilcox an' I are not congenial, an' you know what I think of you."

Babcock half-rose, shaking his fist: "Damn it! Young man, my name's Babcock! And, who are you to come into my camp and map out a campaign with my guide without consulting me? How do I know you will not harm Boyne when you find him?"

Janier shrugged: "One good way to find out would be to follow me and see. I won't be makin' over thirty or forty miles a day. An' as for mappin' out a campaign, as you say, if it don't suit you all you have to do is to change it. Nixon knows that Boyne is in the Heywoods, and that's where I'm goin' to hunt for him. If you want him to go somewhere else, all you got to do is to tell him so—he's workin' for you, not me. But,

I'm not workin' for you, an' I'll go where I damned please!"

Babcock subsided, and looked surlily on while Nixon set up the tent, and then threw together his own light trail pack. As the two started for their canoes Babcock delivered a parting shot: "If John Boyne's alive, young man, he'll put a crimp in your game mighty quick. And if he is not, remember you'll have me to deal with!"

At the river's edge, as the two made ready their canoes, Nixon asked in an undertone: "Say, Gus, that gal—did she say anythin' about seein' me?"

"Why, yes," answered Janier, apparently striving to remember, "She said a man by the name of Nixon had visited her camp at the mouth of the Kendall and tried to hire out to her as a guide, but she had already hired the Injuns. She said you dropped the hint that her father was in the Heywoods. That's why I came over in here."

"If you was figgerin' on goin' through the Heywoods, how come you're down here?"

"We worked it just the way you an' I are workin' it," answered Janier, "They are goin' to start in at the west end, an' I slipped down the Icy to get to Fish River so I could come into the hills from the east. It would have been a lot slower

work with them than with you. "They're probably still on the Coppermine, an' then not knowin' the hills they would have made slow time after they struck them."

"That's right," admitted Nixon. "Boyne, he's in the hills, by now. One of us'll pick him up, an' when we do better keep on travelin' till we meet up with the other."

"All right," assented Janier. "So long!" And a moment later as his own canoe took the current of Fish River, he saw Nixon's canoe disappear into the mouth of the Icy.

Half a mile downstream he landed, packed his duffle into a thicket of spruce, and carried his canoe in after it. He unrolled his sleeping bag and stretched himself at full length with his head propped against his duffle bag. Then he rolled and lighted a cigarette and addressed himself to Puk-puk, who had stretched out at his side: "Wonder just how much of that was lyin', an' how much of it was true—what he said about expectin' very soon to be Boyne's son-in-law? An' if it's true that he expects to be, I wonder if she expects him to be? Anyway, Puk-puk, we'll find out, tomorrow or next day, if Teddy Bye and Bye hustles along. There's due to be a little surprise party when she runs plump onto Babcock at

the mouth of the Icy. It isn't what he thinks, it's what she thinks that counts, an' we never can rest easy till we find that out, can we, Puk-puk? An' when we do find out we've got to hit out after Nixon. We've learned a lot of things today. Boyne isn't in the Heywoods, or Nixon would never have agreed to my plan, an' wherever he is, Nixon wants to get there pretty quick. Why? There's only one reason, Puk-puk—he believes Boyne is about to uncover that mother lode. We can give Nixon two days' start and reach Boyne's camp about the time he does. He'll shove on up the Icy till he thinks he's far enough away from Babcock's camp, an' then he'll *cache* his canoe an' hit out overland. The only place a prospector would be in this country, if he's not in the Heywoods, would be down among those ridges north of Clinton Colden Lake."

He rolled another cigarette and grinned: "If Nixon beats us to Boyne's camp an' succeeds in stealing the location, it will be up to us to pull some story-book stuff, Puk-puk. We'll pick up his trail an' overtake him, an' restore the missin' paper to the girl's father! Guess that will get us in solid with the old man, eh? Where'll Babcock be then? Tell me that! An', if the claim's any good, it'll mean another million or two added to

our pile. Oh, I've got high ideals, Puk-puk, high ideals!"

Janier camped that night in the thicket, and toward noon, next day, finished his lunch, and leaving Puk-puk in camp, proceeded on foot toward the camp of Babcock, keeping well within shelter of the scrub timber that formed a fringe upon the bank of the river. "He won't get far away from camp for a couple of days," muttered Janier, as he made his way through the scrub, "Nixon sure must have been forcing his trail—another reason to believe he thinks Boyne is about to make his strike."

At a bend of the river scarce two hundred yards below Babcock's camp he slipped into cover of a wind-fallen tree and watched the man who stood upon the extreme tip of a sand point and cast his fly out over the water. As the fly touched the surface there was a flash and a splash, and the light rod in Babcock's hand arched it's slender length. Followed, then, ten minutes of royal give-and-take to the accompaniment of the intermittent whine of the automatic reel as the man stripped in his line, and the occasional splash as the fish broke water in vain effort to dislodge the hook. When the trout tired, Babcock skillfully worked him into shallow water and landed him by

flipping him onto the sand with his foot. Removing the fly, the man tossed the three pound trout higher up onto the beach and walking to the end of the point, cast again.

Janier scowled as he watched the fish flopping about on the dry sand. Other fish were lying about. From his position he could make out their still forms as they lay drying in the hot sun. Again Babcock cast, and again the rod bent to the pull as the fly disappeared in a surface swirl. The performance was repeated and Janier's scowl deepened: "Why in the devil don't he slip 'em back into the water if he wants to keep on fishin'?" he growled, "He's got enough fish lyin' out there now to feed twenty men." Babcock continued to fish, and each fish he landed was tossed up onto the sand to die. When at length he tired of the slaughter, Janier had counted thirty-one that he had landed beside those that lay on the sand when he came.

Babcock stood for some moments, rod in hand, looking down at his catch. Then he stood his rod against a tree, carefully selected a single fish which he washed and gutted at the water's edge, and proceeded forthwith to toss the remaining fish into the stream, where they immediately sank to the bottom, or floated downstream, their bellies

gleaming silver and gold in the rays of the sun. Two fish lodged against a brush jam close beside him, and these Janier secured by means of a crooked stick.

Babcock had fished steadily for three hours, and for another three hours Janier lay behind his windfall alternately napping and watching the mouth of the Icy for the appearance of a canoe. Then, picking up the two fish, he returned to his own camp, and over an almost smokeless fire of dry twigs, he cooked his supper, divided it with Puk-puk, and slipped into his sleeping bag.

Breakfasting upon the remains of the fish, Janier again slipped away, leaving Puk-puk in camp, and again he worked his way stealthily through the scrub, this time taking up a position within twenty yards of Babcock's camp, trusting to the fact of the ground's being marshy, that the man would not venture in his direction. From this point of vantage, screened as he was by a dense clump of young trees, Janier commanded a view of the camp, the beach, and part of the mouth of the Icy.

After a half-hour of waiting Babcock emerged from the tent, kindled a smoky fire, picked up his blackened tea pot, which he rinsed and filled at the river, and returning to the fire, cut many slices of

bacon. The preparation of breakfast occupied the better part of an hour during which Babcock heartily and audibly cursed the country and the vicissitudes thereof. He cursed the flies and mosquitoes, the smoke of the green wood fire that whipped and rolled into his face and brought stinging tears to his eyes. He cursed, singly and collectively, Boyne, and Nixon, and Janier, and he cursed and threatened the girl! Likewise, when he partook of his breakfast, he cursed the overdone, bitter tea, and the underdone, greasy bacon.

In his place of concealment Janier listened and watched and smiled happily. Until the moment when Babcock had included the girl within scope of his muttered curses, the rôle he had assumed of spy and eavesdropper had been distasteful to him. He must know, he would know, the girl's attitude toward Babcock. He, himself had distrusted the man from the start. And he knew, now, that the distrust had been warranted. But, what of Irma Boyne? Did she trust him even as her father trusted him? Or had she penetrated the thin mask of friendship and looked upon the real man. He would soon know. Today, surely, she and Teddy Bye and Bye should complete the traverse of the river. An hour passed, and suddenly

Janier drew closer behind his screen, and strained his eyes toward the river. There it was—half way across—a canoe! And, in the bow, the girl was pointing toward the smoke that whipped above the tops of the low trees. Then, a loud "Hello" cut the air, and beside the fire Babcock dropped his pipe, and scrambling to his feet, ran toward the river where the bow of the canoe was just scraping the sand.

CHAPTER XII

AN ASSAULT AND BATTERY

"WHO is this Gus Janier, Teddy Bye and Bye?" asked Irma Boyne as she and the Indian sat at their breakfast upon the morning following Janier's visit to their island camp.

"Heem dam' good man. Heem fadder ol' Pierre Janier, de factor at Chipewayan. Ol' Pierre she sen' Gus to de beeg school to Montreal for git eggicat for be de pries'—de doctaire, mebbe-so. Den, t'ree, four year ol' Pierre she die, an' Gus com' back. But, she ain't tak' de job lak' de Comp'ny wan' heem to. Heem no lak' for stay on de wan plac! So heem git de canoe, de gon, de leetle fish-pole, de blanket an' de beeg dog, an' heem all tam go 'long de reevaire—de lak' een de summer tam, an' een de wintaire heem hit de long snow trail."

"But," questioned the girl, "What does he do? Surely, he doesn't just fish and hunt all the time!"

"*Oui*, she ain' lak' for live on de settlements. She lak' de wil' contry. All de tam she on de move.

Som' tam she fin' de Injun seek, she mak' 'em well lak' de doctaire. Som'tam knock hell out of bad mans. Som' tam, ke'p de Injun from starve. She good man—Gus Janier."

The meal was finished in silence. Thoughts of the man kept obtruding the girl's brain. A look, a word, a little trick or mannerism of speech, the fragment of song that had come to her over the water, the fragments of information she had gleaned from Teddy Bye and Bye, all formed what she was forced to admit was a rather interesting whole. "It's because he is different," she found herself explaining, when realization of it dawned upon her, "All the others, the Indians, the river men, the traders and the men of the Mounted are exactly what one would expect them to be—even that worthless Nixon is doing just what one would expect him to be doing in his environment. If he lived in a city, he would be one of a thousand petty thieves and parasites, no better and no worse, and nothing to distinguish him from the other nine hundred and ninety-nine.

"But this Janier is, somehow, different. One does not expect to find a young man of education wandering aimlessly about a wilderness devoting his energies solely to hunting and fishing. Why, he fairly radiates individuality, personality—at-

mosphere. Even his dog is different from the dogs of others." Again and again, as the canoe traveled eastward, she found her thoughts recurring to Janier. "He kept that silly handkerchief, where most men would have returned it," she smiled to herself, "A true adventurer," she frowned slightly at the word which she had uttered in one sense and interpreted in another. "Anyway I'm glad he's helping me find dad, especially as that horrible Nixon is ahead of us."

At noon they camped at the end of the lake and as they ate their lunch the girl asked, suddenly: "Is he married?"

"Who—marry?" asked the Indian.

"Why, this Gus Janier."

"*Non*, Gus she ain' nev' stay long nuff een wan plac' to git marry. She ain' want for git marry. She lak' too mooch for hont an' feesh, an' paddle de canoe. She ain' got no tam for bodder wit' de 'oman, an' de kids."

During the ascent of the river and the traverse of the lakes, the girl's thoughts recurred again and again from her father, to this care-free wanderer of the North. "Ne'er-do-well, and adventurer, he called himself," she remembered, and smiled, "I'm an adventurer, too, and so is dad, and so is everyone that loves the wild places of the earth

that lie beyond the outposts of what men call civilization."

Late one evening they picked up the peeled tree by means of which Janier had marked the Icy River portage. And after supper, with her eyes on the Heywood Hills, the girl voiced the doubt that had been in her mind ever since her conversation with Janier: "Maybe we're making a mistake, Teddy Bye and Bye, in crossing over to the Icy. After what Nixon let slip I was so sure we would find dad in the Heywoods. And, now, just because this Gus Janier told me that Nixon dropped that hint on purpose, we're leaving the hills behind without even searching them. Personally, I believe that the hills would be exactly the place dad would prospect. How do I know that Janier is not steering us away from the Heywoods for some reason of his own? I wish I knew what to do."

"Me, I'm know Gus Janier. An' I'm know w'at Gus Janier say, dat good t'ing to do. He know de contry. He know Nixon. Som'tam, mebbe-so, you know Gus Janier, too. Den you know dat best' t'ing to do lak' she say."

"Maybe you're right," answered the girl, "Anyway we will go down the river. Somehow I feel as though something were about to happen."

"Dat better we git som' sleep," he grunted, "S'pose som'ting happen I'm lak better we goin' be clos' by Gus Janier."

The portage was negotiated early the following morning, and as the canoe shot down the swift water of the Icy, Irma Boyne's doubts vanished in the wild thrill of the white water.

"Look!" she cried, and pointed toward the smoke that rose above the spruce tops at the moment the canoe shot from the mouth of the Icy onto the broader surface of the larger river, "That must be Janier's camp. He told us to camp here, and maybe he is waiting for us. Maybe he has already found my father! Hurry!" she drove her paddle into the water and as the canoe neared the opposite bank she raised her voice in a loud, clear "Hello!"

The next moment a figure hurried from the timber, and as the canoe beached the girl found herself staring up into the face of Babcock.

The man stepped quickly forward, extending both his hands: "My dear Miss Boyne—Irma! This is indeed a delightful surprise. I heard you were somewhere in the country, and as soon as I had located your father we should have gone to find you."

The girl, ignoring the outstretched hands, had

stepped onto the sand. "You have not found him, then—my father?"

"Not yet, but I shall locate him within a very few days. My guide is even now scouring the country for him. In the meantime, welcome to my camp!"

"Your camp!" exclaimed the girl, making no attempt to conceal the disappointment in her voice.

"Yes, of course. Whose camp did you think it is?"

"Mr. Janier's. He told me to wait here until he could communicate with me. He has volunteered to help me find father."

"Ah, yes," answered Babcock, with a frown. "It was from this person that I learned of your presence in the North."

"Oh, you have seen him, then? Where is he?"

"He is up in the Heywood Hills with my guide searching for your father. They are working toward each other from either end of the range."

"In the Heywoods?" cried the girl. "Why, are—are you sure?"

"Absolutely certain. They both agreed that your father was in the hills, and both left this camp yesterday in search of him."

"He said—he told me that it would be useless to

search the hills. That I would not find father there."

Babcock smiled: "I am not at all surprised. Do you know, Miss Boyne that from the first moment I met that man, I distrusted him. A suave, unscrupulous adventurer, Miss Boyne. One who will leave no stone unturned to ingratiate himself into your favor, now that he knows that my dear friend John Boyne is a man of considerable wealth. One of the first questions he asked was concerning your father's financial status. It is fortunate, indeed, that you found me here. You need have no further fear of him, and in a few days at most, your father will join us, and we can all leave this God-forsaken country together." The man advanced a step toward the girl, who stood speechless, staring toward the purple outline of the distant hills. "Miss Boyne—Irma! Won't you give me the right to care for you—to look after you—always? I have loved you since——"

"No, no!" cried the girl, backing away from him, an angry flush mounting to her cheeks. "I told you once and for all—"

"Ah, Irma—but that was back there in New York. It is different now. You told me then that you did not even trust me. You doubted my

friendship for your father. But, surely, now you cannot doubt! Surely one who has voluntarily braved the dangers and discomforts of this wilderness has stood the test of friendship——"

The girl interrupted him with a gesture: "It is useless to go all over the same ground. I do distrust you, now, as I distrusted you then. And, I always shall distrust you. How in the world you ever succeeded in gaining the confidence of my father I do not know. And, you dare to stand there and speak to me of love, after your thinly veiled threats of our last meeting!"

"You misunderstood me! I know it was tactless—even boorish, if you will, for me to mention the fact of my guardianship in such a matter—but I was beside myself with grief and disappointment over your refusal of me, and of your distrust, I may almost say, of your contempt of my advances——"

"Yes, you may very truthfully say contempt!"

The man shook his head, sadly: "May you never know the wretchedness of being misunderstood, Miss Boyne."

"You need suffer no such wretchedness. I understand you perfectly."

Beyond the first few sentences that passed between the two, Janier had not remained to listen.

Noiselessly he slipped back to his camp, shoved his canoe into the water, loaded it, and with Puk-puk in the bow, paddled swiftly up the river.

A retort to the girl's thrust froze on Babcock's lips, and following his glance, Irma Boyne took a quick step forward at sight of Janier's canoe. A few minutes later the man stepped onto the sand and, ignoring Babcock, greeted her with a smile: "You made good time, Miss Boyne! Unless you care to rest a while, I think we had better push on up river."

Babcock flushed angrily: "Where is John Boyne?" he demanded.

"That is a question that I hope will soon be answered."

"But, you haven't had time to go to the mountains and back. How about Nixon?"

"Nixon!" cried the girl, "What has Nixon to do with it?"

Janier smiled: "Nixon is this man's guide," he explained, "And at the present moment, he is supposed to be scouring the Heywood Hills in search of your father——"

"And you are supposed to be helping him!" interrupted Babcock, "It was your own plan—to search the hills. And here you leave poor Nixon

to do the job alone while you return here to try to curry favor with Miss Boyne by deceiving her into believing that you are searching for her father."

The girl noted the swift narrowing of Janier's eyes and the short decisive struggle for self-mastery that filled the almost imperceptible interim before he spoke: "You are right in believing that it was on Miss Boyne's account I returned here. And I do want her to believe that I am aiding her in her search for her father. In my opinion John Boyne is not in the Heywoods. I believe we shall find him to the southward."

"Then why did you send Nixon on that wild goose chase?"

"Neither Miss Boyne, nor myself care for the society of Nixon. Possibly it was to put distance between us that I suggested that he go into the hills. Possibly there were other reasons. At all events I am not accountable to you for my comings and goings, nor for the reasons therefor."

"Such comings and goings, and the reasons therefor," sneered Babcock, "are blatantly evident to anyone with half an eye. You showed your hand when you inquired so solicitously regarding John Boyne's wealth!"

Janier's fists clenched, but he made no answer,

and turning to the girl, he asked, simply: "Will you go with me—you and Teddy Bye and Bye—up the river?"

Irma Boyne stepped to her canoe: "Wherever you say," she answered, and as Janier offered his hand to help her in, Babcock stepped forward, his face crimson: "Irma Boyne, as your legal guardian in the absence of your father, I forbid your entering that canoe, or going any place whatever with this—this outlander! You yourself told me you came here to meet him by appointment! Have you no sense of shame—to be throwing yourself at the head of this philanderer who cares only for your——" The sentence was never finished. Like a flash of light Janier whirled and his fist landed with an audible thud squarely in the middle of Babcock's face. Again Janier struck, and again, and Babcock, swaying dizzily, settled slowly to his knees, and toppled sprawling upon the sand.

Without so much as a look toward the prostrate figure, Janier stooped and pushing Irma Boyne's canoe clear, stepped into his own.

A sudden cry of warning from the lips of the girl directed his eyes to Babcock, who had struggled to his knees and succeeded in drawing a huge black revolver from the holster at his belt.

"Get him!" cried Janier, leaping from the canoe at the instant the great Chesapeake, with a rolling, throaty growl, launched his eighty pounds full upon the kneeling man who crashed backward upon the sand, discharging the revolver harmlessly into the air. It was but the work of a moment for Janier to obtain the gun which he unloaded, and stepping into the thicket, returned a moment later with Babcock's rifle which, also he unloaded, and walking to the river edge, tossed both guns into the stream. Then he turned to Babcock, who still lay cowering in the sand, with Puk-puk close beside him, yellow eyes glaring balefully and greeting each movement of the man however slight with an ominous warning growl.

"Outside the Mounted there are only two kinds of people in this country who would carry a one-handed gun, fools and crooks—a classification which undoubtedly entitles you to carry two. It's lucky for you that Puk-puk is trained only to hold a man helpless on the first command. Should I repeat the command I don't know exactly what would happen—but I can guess. You can easily recover your guns, but by the time you do we shall be well out of range. I would advise you to leave the short gun where it is, it may save you trouble. I am not quite clever at remembering names, er—

Hancock. But I never forget a face—that I have bruised." Janier stepped into his canoe and called his dog, and a few minutes later both canoes disappeared around a bend of the river.

CHAPTER XIII

BESIDE THE LITTLE FIRE

BEYOND the muskeg through which the Fish River winds for a mile or more above the mouth of the Icy, Janier spoke to the dog. "Go on, Puk-puk! See what you can find." He motioned toward the bank, and without a moment's hesitation the Chesapeake leaped from the canoe, taking the water in a clean-cut dive, and striking out for the bank with the powerful strokes of the perfect swimmer. All during the afternoon the dog kept abreast of the canoes, swimming the river at various points to avoid swamps and muskeg. Sometimes plainly visible where the stream wound through open country, and again lost to sight for an hour at a time where timber lined the banks.

As they sat about the little fire after supper that evening Irma Boyne reached out her hand and caressed the head of the great dog that lay close beside her. "Why did you make Puk-puk walk instead of letting him ride in the canoe?" she asked.

"Oh, he does lots of walking along rivers," answered Janier. "He isn't like these Injun dogs. He's got a nose. Not as delicate or discriminating perhaps, as some hounds, but a perfectly dependable nose, nevertheless. And I have trained him to report to me anything he scents, or sees, or hears that is out of the ordinary."

"How wonderful!" cried the girl, "He's almost human!"

Janier frowned, slightly. "Not at all," he explained. "Puk-puk is just a dog—nothing more. A very good dog, bred for stamina, and endurance, and loyalty. Bred to work all day, and day after day in ice-water, if necessary. Swims like an otter—and dives like one, too." The man walked to the bank and picked up a white stone the size of a hen's egg. "Fetch!" he commanded, showing the stone to Puk-puk, and tossing it far out into the stream. The dog sprang into the water, and swam rapidly, his eyes on the spot where the stone had disappeared. Then, suddenly he dived, and after what seemed a full minute, reappeared on the surface, swam to the bank, and dropped the stone at Janier's feet. After vigorously shaking himself, he returned to his place beside the girl.

"And he is not even wet," smiled Janier.

"Not wet!"

"Only the long outer coat will feel damp to the touch. Just part the hair and examine the shorter inner coat."

"Why, it's dry as a bone! He's like a—a seal!"

"Exactly," smiled the man, "And no one would think of going into raptures over the fact that a seal don't get wet when he goes into the water."

"Oh, it isn't that. It's his intelligence. He sits in your canoe as steadily as a trained canoeman. And, he seems to understand everything you say." She shuddered, slightly. "I thought he would tear Mr. Babcock in pieces. He stood there on the sand as unconcerned, as gentle looking as could be, and the instant you spoke he had changed into the very incarnation of vicious hate. And then, later, when you told him to go ashore and see what he could find, he dived in without a moment's hesitation, and never so much as offered to return to the canoe all the afternoon."

"Even so, there is nothing particularly wonderful about any of these performances, if you will stop to consider that he did only what he has been carefully trained to do. Puk-puk and I have been inseparable companions for three years. We have eaten together, and slept together, and

worked, and played together, and we understand each other perfectly. A friend in Toronto gave him to me when he was just a puppy. He had an idea he would make a sled dog."

"Is he a sled dog?"

"By all odds the best lead dog in all the North. He has the weight and the stamina of the best of the huskys and malamutes, combined with intelligence far superior to the intelligence of any husky or malamute. Why shouldn't he sit a canoe like a trained canoeman? He has traveled more miles in canoes than any canoeman I know. And as for the other things. I have trained him to attack a man at a word of command—got the idea from reading a magazine account of the training of police dogs in Belgium. And, I have trained him to notice anything in the wilderness that has the man-scent upon it. That is why he is wise to his job of working the banks of streams. I have been able to help the police in locating many liquor *caches*." The man paused and laughed. "And incidentally, I think I have personally examined every old discarded pot and tin can between Alaska and the Bay. You see, Miss Boyne, if Puk-puk had any human attributes he would not bother me with inconsequentials. He would learn to discriminate between the worthless and the

worth while objects he runs across, but as it is, he reports as faithfully the finding of a worn out sock, as the discovery of a liquor *cache*. And I praise him equally for his finds. If I were a great dog trainer, one who knew just how far he could go with a dog, I would probably be able to increase his proficiency by teaching him to disregard the inconsequential—but I don't dare to try it. I might undo the work I have already done. And then, how do I know that at some time, the finding of an empty tin or a discarded sock may tell me just the thing I want to know?"

"But," questioned the girl, "Why do you want to know these things? You are not in the Mounted. What difference does it make to you who camped upon the bank of a river, or why? Or, why should you concern yourself with the locating of liquor *caches?*"

"In the great majority of cases, no difference in the world. In certain cases, a difference of life and death—for me or some other. As to the hooch—if they traded it to white men I wouldn't concern myself with it—but they don't. They trade it to the Injuns, and they take in exchange the fur that is so sorely needed by the poor devils to buy food and clothing for their women and their babies. These northern Injuns, for the most

part live a miserable existence, at best. And when most of their fur goes to the hooch trader, the sufferings of the innocent ones is little less than tragic. At least, it seems tragic to me. I know them. I suppose in the great world of mockery that is called civilization, their little sufferings would find scant sympathy. But, to us, who live here in the North, of whose world they are a part, their tragedies seem very real. We are an unsophisticated folk, Miss Boyne. We sorrow with our neighbors."

"But you—you are not—unsophisticated. You have not lived always in the North. You are a man of education."

Janier struck an attitude: "Discovered at last, in spite of all I could do! Was it the Bible, or Joe Miller that said, 'Be sure your sins will find you out'? I assure you, Miss Boyne, I am trying to live it down!"

"Do be serious!" laughed the girl, "And do tell me, what is the idea—the object of your life here in the wilderness?"

"I like it here," answered the man, simply. "I have tried civilization, and have rejected it. One perfectly good education was wasted when I absorbed—whatever I did absorb of it. It is of no use to me whatever."

"But it will be after you—settle down to really doing something."

"Settle down! Do something!" exclaimed the man, with a touch of impatience. "You talk like the rest. What in the name of high heaven do people want me to do? Stay in a post and dicker with Injuns for fur? Join the Mounted and have some one else order my life for me? Practice medicine? Ship on a whaler? Puny jobs! I'll have none of them!"

"But, surely, you can't spend your whole life just roaming around in the wilds, hunting and fishing!"

"Why not?"

Irma Boyne found the direct question disconcerting. She strove to answer, and found herself floundering: "Because—why, because you're wasting your life. It isn't right——"

"By what standards?"

"Why, by the world's standards, of course. By the standards set up by the civilization you profess to scorn—standards that teach that all waste is wrong."

Beside the canoe that had been drawn up on the sand, Teddy Bye and Bye lay asleep in his blankets. The girl's hand caressed lightly the big dog that dozed with his head in her lap, her gaze on the

face of the man who leaned toward her, his eyes alight as he spoke with compelling conviction: "I do not scorn civilization, Miss Boyne. It is merely that I choose not to live under the conditions it imposes. You just said that it teaches that all waste is wrong. But it does not so teach! If it did, it would bring against itself a terrible indictment. My dear lady, the wastes of civilization are appalling. And they are preventable wastes! War, with it senseless waste of men and material. War, into which the youth of the world is inveigled by means of blaring brass bands and high-sounding phrases invented by its instigators to cover its real purpose. Your civilization sanctions war, permits and encourages war, and maintains that war is necessary for its continuation and advancement. Yet war is waste—preventable waste. Look, also at the senseless rape by your civilization of the world's natural resources. Where is the timber, that had it been properly cut and properly used could have been reaped annually as a crop in quantity sufficient for the needs of civilization forever? And the coal? They are saying now about the coal exactly what, less than fifty years ago, they were saying about the timber. There is enough to last forever! And in a hundred years from now they will be

wringing their foolish hands and blubbering about the dearth of coal, even as we are blubbering about the dearth of timber, and damning its wasters. Timber takes long to grow—coal infinitely longer, yet your civilization is nursing them as a drunken sailor nurses his pay check!

"And the waste does not stop there. Look at the petty waste—waste that in the aggregate totals billions—waste in fire losses, in human life, in railway and automobile accidents, and even in the dumping of sewage into rivers and of garbage into the ocean. All ninety percent preventable—yet all smugly accepted. And you, yourself have accepted these things—because you have never given them more than passing thought—because such acceptance has become the conventional posture of civilization. So you see, Miss Boyne, your criticism of my mode of life cannot be based upon civilization's standards or principles of conservation—for civilization has no such standards nor principles. But, merely upon my violation of an accepted convention.

"Men are supposed to be engaged in gainful occupations. Your green grocer, your banker, your butcher, your baker, and your candle-stick-maker, are persons of eminent respectability. Why? Because they are, as you said, 'doing

something'!—they have 'settled down'—they are working to an end. What end? To 'make money'! as the phrase goes. To earn a living and possibly to lay something by, a competence—a great fortune, if they are, in the eyes of the world, 'successful.' And, where is the good of it all? Who beside themselves and those directly dependant upon them, are benefited in the slightest measure by the life conduct of your green grocer, or your banker? Unless, perchance, by accident, not one living soul. Their business is a business of acquisition. They live to get—not to give.

"I believe, Miss Boyne, you will not think me a boaster when I tell you that I consider my own life is upon a broader plane than the lives of these workers for gain. I enjoy life, but I earn my enjoyment. The life of a wanderer in wild places is work—hard work. And the material gain is negligible—or, rather ephemeral—for, I believe that some time I shall accomplish a thing that will make me rich. What that thing is, I cannot tell—power development, mines, reindeer ranching, oil—I do not know. But I do know that when that time comes, the material gain will be merely an incident—not an end. The end and the aim will be in the development of a new land that will be a land of promise for many men and

women. You see, I have my dreams of empire, Miss Boyne, as many men of your civilization have had dreams—pioneers of the civilization that is to follow in their wake. I have every confidence in the ultimate success and glory of your civilization—and damned little patience with its methods!

"And so, you find me, a mere wanderer, going here and there, paying homage only to the great god HUNCH. But, even should my dream of empire never be realized, my life will not have been wasted, for in our wanderings, Puk-puk and I have been the means of doing some measure of good among the little peoples whose lives, at best, are forlorn and meagre, and whose bellies know the gnawing of hunger. Many of these poor devils I have saved from death by disease, and by hunger, and by freezing—and, in the satisfaction of doing these things, lies the pay for my day's work."

The fire had died to red coals that cast just the faintest glow upon the profile of the girl who sat listening as one entranced to the voice that spoke softly out of the gloom at her side. Janier ceased speaking, and in the moment of silence that followed, he caught the glint of a tear upon her lashes as she stared straight before her toward the crest of a wooded ridge where the shoulder of the moon

was just showing through the tops of the stunted trees. Again he spoke—more softly: "I never have defended my position, before. Always I have been criticized, but I have never stooped to defend—to argue—to explain—because I did not care. I did not suppose there lived a person in the whole wide world for whose opinion I cared the snap of my finger. I was wrong. For your opinion I do——"

"Why should you care?" interrupted the girl, with such sudden vehemence that Puk-puk raised his head from her lap, and regarded her with smouldering yellow eyes, "Oh, forgive me! I did not understand! I was a fool—anyone is a fool who attempts to criticize that which they do not understand! What must you think of me?"

"I am going to tell you what I think." There was that in the man's voice—a note of suppressed emotion, of some mighty force held in check, that caused the girl to meet his gaze with tear-dimmed eyes. His lips moved: "For your opinion I do care. I care tremendously, Miss Boyne—Irma——" the voice trembled, and broke. The next instant his arm was about her and she was crushed against his side, while in her ear sounded his voice in a hoarse husky whisper: "I love you—love you, dear! I have

loved you from the moment I first saw you—before that—when your voice floated out to me over the still waters of the lake I loved you! For years and years I have loved you. I didn't know what it was—the longing—the irresistible, illusive call—but, now I know. The longing was for you, darling—and the call was your soul calling to mine!"

For one brief moment the girl struggled, helplessly, hopelessly, against the mighty torrent of his love, then the torrent engulfed her, the struggles ceased, and as his lips met hers, she knew that her arms were around him and she was drawing him closer—closer.

The moon rose clear of the timbered ridge, and from some little land-locked lake came the quavering cry of the loon. "And I love you, my darling," she whispered softly, as with her head resting against his shoulder, she looked up into his eyes, "I too have heard the call, and tonight, I have found the answer. I love it all—the moon, the untrodden ways, and even the wild, shivery night-cries. Always I have been attracted to the wild country, as my father is attracted. But tonight you have taught me to love it! And to love the man who is big enough to trample rough shod the petty conventions of men! Oh, you have made me see it all so differently—the values—the

sordid, humdrum lives of the money-getters back there, and the simple dignity, the unselfish, the almost unconscious service of your life here. No wonder Teddy Bye and Bye fairly adores you! And, no wonder Nixon hates! And, now we must hurry and find Dad! I want him to know you and to love you—as I know you and love you."

Janier smiled: "Dads don't always do that, you know! If I should find no more favor with him, than I have found with your estimable guardian——"

"That Babcock!" cried the girl, in disgust, "I hate him! And, I am afraid of him, too!" She shuddered, "Oh, if you had not happened to come just when you did! He dared to speak to me of love! He tried it once before, and when I told him what I thought of him he threatened. He wants Dad's money! That's what he wants, and he thought the way to get it would be to marry me. But, Dad will love you—he can't help it!"

The man laughed: "We shall soon know. You and Teddy Bye and Bye will camp tomorrow on Sussex Lake, and Puk-puk and I will start hunting for him. If I am not mistaken we shall find him somewhere in the ridges yonder to the eastward."

CHAPTER XIV

BOYNE'S CAMP

LEAVING the girl and the Indian, next day comfortably encamped on the east shore of Sussex Lake, which is the headwater of Back's Fish River, Janier made up a light trail-pack and with Puk-puk at his heels struck off to the eastward.

"I may be back tonight, dear," he said, as he took leave of the girl who had accompanied him a short distance from camp, "Or, it may be three or four days. And, when I come I shall bring your father."

"And, I will be waiting for you! Oh, I do want to see you two together—my two men! Father is larger than you, and——"

Janier interrupted with a grimace. "In that case I may appear about two jumps ahead of him and going strong!"

The words were drowned in a laugh, and he kissed her, and was gone.

It was late in the evening of the second day

when Puk-puk approached in great bounds to where Janier was traversing the crest of a bald ridge, his eyes scanning the country for signs of Boyne or his camp. It was thus the two worked together, the man on the ridges where his superior vision could command the distance, and the dog in the scrub-timbered valleys where his sense of scent outvalued the sense of sight. Pausing before his master the dog whined, and whirling about, started off in the direction from which he had come. Janier followed, picking his way with all possible haste down the steep side of the ridge. At the bottom the dog was waiting, and when the man came up, he plunged into the scrub and led the way at an angle up the narrow valley.

Two hundred yards farther on the dog halted before the dead ashes of a small fire, and looking up into the man's face, wagged his tail and voiced a series of low whines of delight. Janier reached down and thumped the dog's ribs and shoulders with great slaps of approbation: "Good dog, Puk-puk! It took a long time to find it, didn't it, old man? But you hung to it. Yes, sir! An', now, down with you! I don't want you rompin' around here mussin' things all up till I look around a bit."

The dog, his yellow eyes alert to the man's every

movement, settled onto his belly, and without moving from his tracks, subjected the ground and surrounding scrub to minute scrutiny.

"Fire was made yesterday, or today," he confided to the dog. "It rained night before last, an' no rain has fallen on the ashes. Both days, I guess. He camped here last night. Didn't bother to cut branches. There's his hip hole. So he was no Injun or Husky. Bein' a white man the chances are it was either Boyne, himself, or Nixon. If it was Boyne, it's a good bet we're not very close to his camp, or he wouldn't have camped here for the night—must be at least a half a day from here. If it was Nixon, the chances are we're pretty close to Boyne's camp, or he wouldn't have been so careful to camp in such thick cover. There are a hundred better campin' places within a few hundred yards, any one of which a man who was not guarding against discovery would have selected. He wore moccasins. That would indicate Nixon. Boyne would hardly wear moccasins when his work takes him most of the time among rocks. I guess we'll decide it was Nixon, an' we've got to hurry an' dope out which direction he took before we camp for the night. The trail might be too cold for your nose to pick up in the morning—may be too cold now,

but we'll see. Wait just a minute, an' I'll try to help you a bit. He camped last night. Let's see, which way was the wind last night? If we're right in believing we are close to Boyne's camp it ought to be upwind from here. There wasn't much wind but what there was came from the north-east. I remember we sat on the north-east side of our fire. An' he slept a little north of north-east of his. These ridges run almost north and south. Puk-puk, I'll bet Boyne's camp lies either in the next valley to the east, or the second one—not a bit farther than that!" The man glanced at his watch. It showed nine o'clock. "Come on, Puk-puk, we've still got an hour of good daylight. Which way did he go, boy? Let's see if you can pick him up."

The dog sprang up, at the wave of the man's hand, and circled about, his nose to the ground. After a few moments he struck off to the eastward and Janier followed. A few rods farther on the dog again began to circle, ranging to the right and to the left, and far to the front. Janier grinned: "Damned shame to make you do a hound dog's work, Puk-puk. But keep at it. You may find somethin', even if you can't hold the trail. If Nixon were a crippled bird, now, or a wounded caribou, or deer, you could follow him to the Bay."

On the summit of the ridge, Janier paused and searched the narrow valley that lay before him for signs of a camp. But no flicker of fire met his gaze, nor any thin column of smoke. The valley was more sparsely wooded than the one he had just left, and he was on the point of descending the ridge and crossing to the next, when once more Puk-puk came racing toward him. Following the dog to a point at the base of the ridge and a considerable distance up the valley, he found himself staring into the mouth of a crosscut in front of which lay a scattered heap of rock fragments.

Swinging his pack to the ground he produced his flashlight and dropping to his knees explored the interior. Twenty feet from its mouth, the tunnel terminated abruptly in a face, before which lay an assortment of hammers and drills, together with a bag containing several sticks of giant, and a coil of fuse.

"Good boy!" he cried thumping the dog, "We've found Boyne's workin's, an' we'll soon find Boyne himself!" Returning the flashlight, he swung the pack to his shoulder, and studied the ground. "He's been quite a while at this job, an' ought to have left a plain trail to his camp." A short distance from the tunnel entrance he stopped

suddenly and stared at two stakes, driven side by side into the ground. His forehead contracted in a frown: "What the devil!" he exclaimed, and continued to stare at the stakes. "This is evidently a corner stake," he muttered, "But why two?" A short search revealed another corner, with two stakes marking it. The third and fourth corners were soon located, each marked by two stakes, and Janier, searched the ground for the centre stake to which the location would be affixed. He found it, or rather them, for as at the corners, there were two. To each stake a notice was affixed with a bit of wire. Dropping to his knees, Janier loosened both notices, and removing their oil-cloth coverings spread them side by side. Both were identical, and a flush of anger, followed by a sudden thrill of chilling apprehension swept over him. One notice, signed by John Boyne, was written in a clear full hand, while the other, a verbatim copy, was a labored scrawl. At the bottom appeared the name, George Crowley!

"What the devil?" cried Janier, staring at the scrawl. "This is Nixon's work! But why has he used Crowley's name?"

His first impulse was to pull up the second set of stakes, and to destroy the notice. But, remembering that such procedure constituted a crime

which carried a heavy penalty, he rewrapped both notices in their weather-proof coverings, and wired them in place. For well he knew that should Constable Crowley find the stakes tampered with he would leave no stone unturned to bring him to book.

"I've got to move fast, now!" cried Janier, aloud. "Boyne's staked an' probably gone, an' Nixon will try to beat him to the recorder, an' stand a good chance of doin' it, too, with his knowledge of the country! But—I can't leave *her!* I've got to make sure Boyne's gone out, an' then hit back for her. Maybe at that I can beat Nixon out. I know a thing or two about this country that even he don't know! But, first I'll stake for her! It's a game three can play as well as two!" Hurriedly the man cut and drove his stakes and copied the location to which he signed the name of Irma Boyne which he affixed to a third center stake and in the waning light took up his search for a trail. "Too wise to leave one," he muttered, after many minutes of futile search. "Came a different way each time." Giving up the idea of finding a trail, he struck straight across the valley, hoping to find Boyne's camp beyond the next ridge.

The valley beyond was more thickly timbered, and Janier wasted no time taking observations

from the crest of the ridge, reasoning that the chance of finding a camp fire was small, and in the failing light Puk-puk's nose was of far greater value than his own eyesight. And, so it proved to be, for hardly had he reached the level of the valley than the dog was at his side, whining and wagging his tail. Janier hastened after him, and soon came upon a camp that had evidently been occupied for a number of weeks. The camp was deserted, as he had expected, and stepping to the little tent, he lighted the candle that stood upon the rude pole table.

The place was in the utmost confusion. Books and papers were scattered about the floor, while blankets and various articles of clothing had been tossed outside to lie in a disordered heap before the door. "Nixon found Boyne gone, an' ransacked the place," was his first thought, as he stared about him. Then, suddenly, the chill of apprehension once more gripped him. "If Boyne had gone to file his claim, why had he left all his personal effects behind?" The man's eyes swept the jumble of articles, cooking utensils, camp dishes, a pick, pan, shovel, and a couple of light hammers. Yes, Boyne's pack sack was here, and his blankets, and clothing—and even his toothbrush!

Janier's was a brain trained to draw deductions from meagre sequence of sign. Very carefully and methodically, he examined the interior of the tent, even hurriedly scanning the fragments of notations in small notebooks, and upon half sheets of paper that he shook from between the leaves of several text books on mining. One of these sheets he read and reread, and reread again. The third reading finished, he sat for some moments staring straight at the flame of the candle, then with a peculiar smile upon his lips, folded it, and placed it very carefully inside the sweat band of his hat.

At the end of an hour he sat upon Boyne's blankets and checked off his findings to Puk-puk, who listened with head cocked wisely to the side: "There's somethin' wrong here, old man," he confided, "somethin' devilish wrong! Let's see if we can figure it out: This was a two-man camp. Boyne was one of them, an' his companion was an Injun, an' that Injun was old Nenikna. I know, because I found one of his worn-out gloves, an' it happened to be one of a pair of my own I gave him a year ago. Boyne an' the Indian are both gone. The Indian's belongings are gone. Boyne's belongings are here. Yet Boyne himself, is not here. Clearly he did

not go away to file his claim, an' leave his pack-sack, his canoe paddles, an' his toothbrush behind, even if he had other blankets an' clothing, which I doubt, for there are enough of both here to last for a couple of years. An'—an'—there we are! Now, if Boyne didn't go away, he was either taken away, or he is still in this vicinity. Neither Nenikna nor Nixon could have taken him away single-handed. And Nenikna would never have helped Nixon. If he was not taken away, he is either dead, or rendered unable to return to his camp. God! Puk-puk, how I wish, for just this once, you were a blood-hound! With all this stuff of Boyne's here you could find him in no time. An' we've got to start right now! I won't be much help till the moon gets higher, but thank the Lord, you don't need light to work in. Come on!"

Janier leaped to his feet and walking a short distance down the valley, waved his hand toward the eastward. "Go on, Puk-puk! See what you can find!" As the dog leaped into the scrub, Janier followed, making poor going of it in the comparative darkness.

At the end of an hour, they had half-circled the tent and struck off to the westward. A low whine from the dog brought Janier to his side at a point

not twenty yards from the tent. Before him lay the form of a man—an oldish man large of frame. The man was dead. Janier could not see his features. He lay sprawled upon his belly, his face against the ground close beside a jagged fragment of rock. For some moments Janier stood looking down at the man. Then, calling the dog, he hurried to the tent, procured his electric flashlight, and returned to the body, which, with its surroundings, he submitted to the same careful scrutiny with which he had examined the interior of the tent. The man's hat was gripped in his hand, and a little above and behind the left ear was a peculiar, crescent-shaped wound from which blood had flowed freely, matting the rather thin grizzled hair. Upon a sharp corner of the rock-fragment close beside the man's head a few greyish hairs were cemented with freshly dried blood. The fragment, partly embedded in the ground had evidently at some distant time, become detached from a much larger fragment at whose base it lay. Janier turned his attention to this larger fragment. It rose to a height of eight or ten feet sheer from the valley floor. A thick, irregular slab outcropping from the ground. Upon the opposite side of the body from this slab, and distant not more than three feet, a rock-ledge rose perpen-

dicularly to a height of twenty or thirty feet. Boyne had met his end as he passed between the ledge and the slab. Behind the slab, upon the side away from the body was a tangle of scrub. Very carefully Janier, his flashlight directed upon the ground, crept around to the rear of the fragment. A few freshly broken spruce twigs lay upon the ground close against the base of the slab, where the soft earth had been trodden by moccasined feet.

Janier crawled back to the body, and for ten minutes he stared at the wound, and at the jagged corner of rock fragment to which clung the hairs and the dry blood. The point of the fragment presented an almost perfect triangle. The wound almost a perfect crescent!

Very carefully, with the tips of his fingers, the man explored the wound. Red blood welled from beneath the dry. The skull was broken, a segment crushed inward. Janier could feel a loose fragment as though a piece of the bone had slivered off. It moved at his touch and grasping it gently between his thumb and finger he withdrew it from the wound and held it close to the lens of his flashlight. Wetting his finger with his tongue, he removed the blood from the fragment, and examined it for several moments minutely. Then,

he returned the fragment to the wound, pressing it deeply, and as it entered beneath the inner edge of the skull, he crowded it sidewise. Holding the light close to the wound, he opened his knife, and with the blade pushed the fragment well back beyond the edge of the skull. He turned the body upon its back, and noted that the man's shirt-collar was rolled back as though habitually worn open, and that the neck was tanned as was the face. Running through this tan clear around the man's neck was a thin white mark—a narrow ribbon of untanned skin. Gently, he pressed the lids over the staring eyes and, rising to his feet, walked slowly to the tent, procured a blanket, which he threw over the body, weighted its edges with rock fragments, and returning to the tent, made up his bed and slept.

CHAPTER XV

CROWLEY MAKES AN ARREST

It seemed to Janier that he had scarcely closed his eyes when he was awakened by the sound of a rifle shot. Instantly he was upon his feet, his eyes upon the dog which stood with ears alert, staring straight down the valley. "So, that's where it came from, eh? All right, Puk-puk, just a second and we'll slip down there?"

A few moments later, with the dog at his heels he was speeding through the scrub as fast as his moccasined feet would carry him. A mile below Boyne's camp the valley widened perceptably, and the creek which at the camp was hardly more than a trickle, became canoe water. The scrub of the upper valley thinned, increasing his range of vision in the rapidly gathering daylight. A quarter of a mile farther on he halted suddenly, and drawing into cover of a bushy tree, peered across a small beaver meadow toward a point where three figures were bending over some object upon the ground. "Huskies!" muttered the man, and

stepping into the open, walked rapidly toward them. Catching sight of him, the three stood erect and awaited his approach. Janier saw that the object upon the ground was a caribou fawn. The Eskimo stared stolidly as he greeted them, then one of them stepped quickly forward, his wide flat face stretched even wider in a grin that seemed to bisect it from ear to ear: "Me know you. You Gushany!"

"Hello, Kormik?" cried Janier, recognizing the man as a native he had once employed as interpreter on a trip to the coast. "What in the devil you doin' here?"

The man gave every evidence of delight that Janier had remembered his name: "Hunt—feesh," he replied, and pointed to the eastward. "We go feesh Beverly Lak'."

"Beverly Lake, eh?" An idea suddenly occurred to Janier, and he laid a hand on the man's arm: "Where you boat?"

The Eskimo pointed to the southward: "Beeg lak'."

"How many boat?"

"Me, *kayak*," he answered, and pointing to the other two, he said, "*Umiak*."

"Good! You savvy police house—Baker Lake?"

The man nodded.

"You know me. Gus Janier tell you the truth." Again the other nodded emphatically, and Janier continued: "All right, now you listen." He paused, and tearing a page from a small note book which he drew from his pocket, hastily scribbled a few lines with the stub of a pencil and handed it to the Eskimo. "You take paper to police—Baker Lake. Go fast! Take *kayak*. Go like hell! Four hundred mile! Give paper to police. Bye-m-bye I come. Find you Beverly Lake. I give you Company order you get twenty-five fish hook, five file, one ax, one pound tobac', one hundred cartridge. You savvy?"

The man's face fairly beamed as he took the paper: "Me go! Mebbe-so ten sleep."

Janier laughed: "If you make it in ten sleeps, I give you two hundred cartridge!"

The man nodded his understanding, and without a word to his companions, he turned and hurried toward the lake, the other two, not at all comprehending what it was about, followed more slowly, one of them shouldering the fawn.

"There is no hurry now. That will spell Nixon's finish if he shows up to file," muttered Janier, and turned up the valley.

As he returned to Boyne's camp he followed the bed of the creek and found the prospector's canoe *cached* in a thicket of scrub at a point that appeared to be the head of navigation. Examining the ground he noted that another canoe had been drawn from the bushes. "Yesterday, or day before," he reasoned, as he examined the tracks in the mud. "This sign hasn't been rained on. That would be Nenikna. But, where did he go? And why?" As the man continued up the creek he puzzled over the disappearance of the Indian. "He went before Boyne—died. If Nixon had chased him off, or if he'd returned to camp and found things—as they are, he would never have stopped to collect all his stuff."

When within a few feet of the tent, Puk-puk, who had been trotting along directly in front of Janier, halted so suddenly that the man stumbled against him. The dog stood with muscles stiff, and eyes fixed upon the tent, as he sniffed the air. Stepping around him, Janier cautiously advanced a few steps to a point that admitted a view of the tent's interior. Then, he, too, halted abruptly. He was staring straight into the muzzle of Constable Crowley's revolver. And beyond the gun's muzzle Constable Crowley's eyes glared with a mingled triumph and hate.

"Put 'em up!" The officer spat out the words, and as Janier elevated his hands, he laughed:

"Don't be a fool, Crowley. You know I'm not heeled. That twenty-two rifle there beside you is the only deadly weapon I carry—an' you know it!"

"I'll know it a damn sight better when I git through searchin' you. I've got you dead to rights, at last! Remember what I told you last time I seen you?"

"Don't remember anything important you told me."

"You don't, eh? Well, I told you that I'd see you agin, an' when I did, you'd wisht to God I hadn't! Guess that sounds kind of important, now, don't it?"

"So far as I know, nothing you've ever said, Crowley, is of any importance. You spoke a moment ago of having me dead to rights. What's the meaning of this fool play, anyhow?"

"What's the meanin' of it? Fool play, eh? You won't think it's no fool play when I git through with you! I've caught you red-handed right on the ground, after murderin' old man Boyne, ain't I?"

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Janier, with a deprecatory grin, "So that's what you're kickin' up all this fuss about, is it?"

"So you admit it, eh?"

"No, no, Crowley. I don't admit anything at all. But, put down that gun. I'm tired holdin' my hands up, an' it must look foolish."

"I'll be damned if you ain't a cool one, Janier," admitted the officer, as he stepped from the tent and approached to within arm's length. "But, it ain't goin' to git you nothin'. You ain't goin' to put nothin' over on me. You've got by fer a long time, an' had a lot of 'em fooled, but you ain't fooled me. Come acrost with that there location paper!"

"What location paper?"

"The one you took off'n old Boyne's neck. D'you think I'm blind that I couldn't see where he'd wore it around his neck with a thong?"

"I haven't got any location paper."

Crowley took a step backward, still keeping the man covered: "You're under arrest fer the murder of John Boyne," he stated, "An' I'll damn soon find out whether you've got the paper or not. I went through yer stuff before you come up. Take off yer shirt an' toss it here."

Janier complied, and watched with an irritating grin as the other subjected it to a minute examination. "Now yer pants," ordered the officer. When he had examined the garment he called for

Janier's moccasins, socks, and undergarments. Then, his hat. With an exclamation of triumph he produced the folded paper that Janier had secreted beneath the band of his hat. "Thought you could fool me, eh?" he cried, as he opened the paper and read its penciled lines.

"That's not a location paper," said Janier, "and is of no interest to anyone but me."

"It's in Boyne's writin', ain't it? It was his'n an' you was caught with it in yer possession. It's jest as good fer evidence as a location paper. I don't know what you wanted this paper fer. It don't look to me like it was important enough to kill a man fer. But that jest shows how easy you'd commit murder." The officer folded the paper and placed it carefully in his wallet. "But you got that location paper somewheres. It must of be'n a location paper he carried around his neck. He sure as hell wouldn't of carried this here one."

Janier laughed: "Don't it occur to you, Crowley, that if he'd have made his strike he'd have gone out to file it, instead of carrying around his location description as long as he must have worn that thong around his neck to leave the mark it did?"

The officer glowered at him for a moment:

"Then, if he ain't made his strike yet, what in hell did you kill him fer?"

"I told you I didn't kill him."

Crowley sneered: "Who did, then? Mebbe, if you're so damn' smart, you kin tell me that."

"Give me my clothin' an' we'll talk it over," suggested Janier. "What makes you think he was murdered?"

Crowley seated himself on the ground, his gun in his lap: "Put yer clothes on, an' we'll go up an' look him over. Damn' if I'd want to look at a man I'd killed."

"I, either. But, first let me get somethin' to eat. Have you had breakfast?"

"No, I ain't. I'd forgot breakfast. I camped las' night not over a quarter of a mile above here. If I'd of come on jest that much further, I might of got here in time to see Boyne killed. But I didn't know where in hell his camp was, an' how clost I was to it. About an hour ago I woke up sudden. Thought I heard a shot, but I wasn't sure. Anyway I couldn't git to sleep agin, so I rolled my blankets an' come on. An' I stumbled onto—him, an' then this camp. Then I seen your outfit here, an' I be'n waitin' fer you to come back. Go ahead an' git breakfast fer the two of us. I'll

jest set back with this here gun to see that you don't make no mistakes."

"What were you huntin' Boyne's camp for?" asked Janier, over the bacon and tea.

"Mebbe, just on a hunch."

"Thought you were goin' to the coast after evidence against Nixon."

"I was, but I got caught in the Malley Rapids. Smashed my canoe all to hell an' jest got out by the skin of my teeth. So I worked my way back up river a-foot an' found Babcock where I'd left you, at the mouth of the Icy. When he told me about you hittin' off up river, I had a hunch, an' I struck out acrost country. I know'd Boyne was down here somewheres. I be'n huntin' his camp fer two days." The officer paused, his eyes leering into Janier's face, and his hand on the butt of the gun in his lap. "An' that brings me to the rest of it. I kind of helt off on it fer a surprise. Tell me!" he exclaimed, sharply, "What have you done with the Injun an' the girl?"

Janier regarded him with a look of indifference: "I left them in camp, back on Sussex Lake, while I scouted around. You see, I promised Miss Boyne I'd find her father."

"I'll say you found him! Throw your outfit together if yer through. We're goin' up an' have

a look at Boyne, an' then we're goin' over an' have a look at the Injun an' the girl. I'd rather git three murders on you than one, any day."

Janier made up his pack and tossing it beside Crowley's, accompanied the officer to the body, beside which lay the blanket with which Janier had covered it the previous evening. Crowley had rolled the body into its original position to examine the wound. "Now," he said, "If you don't think he was murdered, what in hell killed him?"

Janier pointed to the piece of rock: "Maybe he fell and struck his head on that. There's blood and hair stickin' to it."

Crowley grinned: "He might of, but he didn't. You ain't half as smart as you think you are, Janier—not as smart as I thought you was. D'you think you could fool anyone with smearin' blood an' hair on that rock, when the rock don't no more fit the hole in his head than nothin'?"

"What did make the wound, then?" asked Janier, apparently unperturbed by the officer's discovery.

"I wisht to God I know'd! What made it, is whatever you hit him with! An' I've hunted all over hell fer a weapon. You've hid it successful,

so far. But, we'll be comin' back this way, an' mebbe we kin find it then. I'd say, lookin' at the hole, it was made with one of Boyne's own prospectin' hammers."

"Looks like it, don't it?" agreed Janier.

The officer stared at him: "Damn' if you ain't the cold-bloodedest proposition I ever seen!" he cried, suddenly, "It—it gives me the creeps jest to listen to you!"

"Look here, Crowley," asked Janier, "Do you really believe I killed this man?"

"Really believe it! I know damn' well you did! Who else was around here? What was you doin' here with one of Boyne's papers hid in yer hat fer? Do I believe it! I'll prove it!"

Janier shrugged: "You're a bigger fool than I thought you were, that's all. But, come on. We'll hit out for Sussex Lake."

Carefully they covered the body, and returning to the tent, swung the packs to their shoulders. When Janier's was in place, Crowley stepped before him. "Stick 'em out!" he ordered.

"What do you mean?"

The officer reached into his pocket and withdrew a pair of handcuffs: "I mean I ain't goin' to take no chances with you. You're too damn' smooth to suit me. I'll travel better with you if I

know I've got you where you can't put nothin' over on me—see?"

A crimson flush overspread Janier's face. For an instant he contemplated hurling himself upon the man, but Crowley divined the thought and the next moment had him covered.

"No you don't! Jest slip them bracelets on, an' no monkey work. An' remember that the first crooked move you make, out goes yer light! I ain't takin' no chances on you!"

Janier snapped the irons upon his own wrists, and with the officer following closely, struck across the valley to the westward, being careful to give wide berth to the spot where lay the triple-staked claim.

CHAPTER XVI

NIXON RETURNS

Constable Crowley spoke the truth when he told Janier that he had spilled in the Malley Rapids. Unfamiliar with the river he was in the suck of the big rapid before he realized his danger. Faster and faster flew the canoe despite the man's utmost efforts to check its speed and turn it into one or the other of the banks that grew higher and rockier as the swiftness of the current increased, until with a mighty roar the river plunged into a veritable gorge, whose rock-ribbed floor churned the water into a leaping, seething fury of white-water.

By sheer luck the canoe rode two-thirds the length of the gorge before the inevitable happened and it crashed full upon a rock and broke in two. In the icy water Crowley was whirled, now on the surface, now in the grip of an undertow scraping and bumping the bottom, to be shot to the surface again when the undercurrent boiled upward. Five minutes later, bruised and battered and half-drowned he was spewed from the gorge, and in the

grip of a friendly eddy scraped along a tongue of sand with just life enough left in his body to drag himself clear of the water and crawl to the bank, where he lay head downward until he had coughed and retched the water from his tortured lungs. Except for the clothing he wore, and the revolver at his belt not one vestige of his outfit remained, and after a few hours rest he headed up-river on foot, arriving at Babcock's camp the day following Janier's departure with Irma Boyne and the Indian.

In scowling silence he listened to Babcock's story of the departure of Nixon and Janier into the Heywood Hills in search of Boyne, of the arrival of the girl and the Indian, of the reappearance of Janier and of his immediate departure up the river, taking Irma Boyne and the Indian with him. Babcock dwelt upon the events immediately preceding this departure, which he referred to as the abduction of his ward, giving a much garbled account of how he had been disarmed and set upon by Janier and his dog when he had rushed to the defence of the girl. At the conclusion of the narrative, Crowley, pleading fatigue, threw himself down in Babcock's tent and for an hour endeavored to size up the situation from many angles. He knew that, despite Babcock's state-

ment, Nixon had not gone into the Heywoods, for he knew that Nixon knew that Boyne was to the southward. Janier's early reappearance would argue that he, also, knew that Boyne was not in the hills, and his immediate departure up-river showed that he had a fairly accurate knowledge of Boyne's whereabouts. Nixon, with the start he had and his knowledge of the location of Boyne's camp, should have no trouble in arriving there first. But, sooner or later, Janier also would find Boyne's camp. If Boyne had already made his strike, as Nixon firmly believed he was on the point of doing, then in all probability, Nixon was already in possession of the location. But—and here Crowley's scowl deepened, and whispered curses hissed from his lips—if Boyne had not yet made his strike, and Nixon was forced to wait upon his making it, the chances were strongly in favor of Janier's locating Boyne's camp in the meantime. In which event Crowley knew that any chance he and Nixon would have of obtaining Boyne's location would vanish into thin air.

Suddenly, he sat erect, cursing his sore muscles, and joined Babcock who was smoking beside the fire. He had discounted Babcock's story of the abduction, but therein lay a chance, and he would take it.

"You say Janier assaulted you," he began, "What did he hit you with?"

"With his fists, I think."

"Sure it wasn't no deadly weapon?"

"I—I can't say for sure. I didn't see anything in his hands."

"That's too bad," muttered Crowley, "If it had be'n some deadly weapon, now——"

Babcock caught the drift of the man's thought: "But, surely, if you are thinking of arresting him, any assault is a criminal offence."

Crowley shook his head: "I wouldn't dare fetch a man in without nothin' more agin' him than assault an' battery. That would go down in the settlements, but not here. I'd get bawled out good an' proper."

"But, he set his dog upon me. That ought to constitute an assault of sufficient magnitude."

The officer looked doubtful: "If I hadn't of lost my manual I might look it up. But I don't know if a dog is a deadly weapon. Looks like one might be—but, then agin, a dog's a animal, an' not no weapon. About this here abduction business? Mebbe we could hold him on that, if you'd prefer charges."

"I shall certainly prefer charges, and very serious charges!" cried Babcock. "The young

lady is my ward, and as such is subject to my authority and command."

Crowley scratched his head: "There's somethin' about abduction all right. But I can't remember what it is. What did he do, knock you down, an' then grab her an' throw her into the canoe an' paddle off?"

"Well, not exactly that. After assaulting me, he made his dog guard me, and while I lay helpless upon the sand, he ordered Miss Boyne into the canoe. Evidently terrorized by what she had just witnessed she dared not disobey him for fear of being treated as I was treated. The instant she was seated in the canoe, Janier shoved it out into the river, and the Indian started to paddle away. The poor girl had no chance of regaining shore. Her action in entering the canoe showed plainly that she acted through fear or duress, or under the spell of some hypnotic influence the man held over her. You can imagine the anguish with which I helplessly watched her abduction, Constable, when I tell you that she was shortly to have become my wife."

"Um-hum, pretty tough," agreed Crowley, "Guess that constitutes abduction, all right. Anyways, I'm goin' to arrest him fer it, an' it'll be up to the Inspector or the judge to turn him

loose. I'm goin' to take my discharge anyhow in the fall. To hell with 'em!"

"And, you will arrest this Janier?"

"I'll say I'll arrest him! But you got to back me up with charges."

"Count on me," answered Babcock. "If anything I can say will put him there, he'll spend a long time behind the bars."

"Well, I better be shovin' on, then. The quicker I start the better. You wait here fer Nixon, an' then you'll be comin' on up river in a canoe, so you loan me yer pack-sack an' a blanket, an' some grub, an' a hat. Tell Nixon I'll be waitin' either on Sussex Lake or somewheres along the north shore of Clinton Colden."

Crowley struck southeastward, avoiding the muskeg and swamp country of the river valley. That night he camped on the northern reach of the ridge country, and thereafter for two days he drove himself mercilessly in an effort to intercept Janier before he could locate Boyne's camp. But, no trace of either Janier, or Nixon, or Boyne did he find, and then, early the following morning he stumbled upon the body of Boyne, carefully covered as Janier had left it, with a blanket. His first emotion as he tore away the covering and discovered the fatal wound, was one of exultation.

Nixon had done his work! Boyne had made his strike, else Nixon would not have killed him, and undoubtedly Nixon was already on his way back to Babcock's camp with the location paper! The officer noted the white line that indicated where Boyne had carried the paper, and the absence of the thong that had suspended it. His second emotion was one of anger against Nixon: "The damn' fool!" he muttered, as he glanced at the blood-smeared corner of rock fragment, "Anyone could see that there rock never made that hole in his head! An' coverin' him with a blanket! How in hell did he figger anyone that found him would think he could of covered hisself up an' weighted down the blanket with rocks? It's a good thing fer him, I was the one that found him!" He was about to remove the blanket from the spot when he glanced up and caught sight of Boyne's deserted camp. Dropping the blanket, he hastened over to inspect the tent, and, with a shock that for a moment set his very blood running cold, he came upon Janier's blankets and pack-sack. A moment later the shock of fear turned to a thrill of exultation. It was Janier, not Nixon, who had killed Boyne! Janier had the location, and he, Crowley, would seize it for evidence when he placed the man under arrest. Later he would

copy it, and send Nixon to affix the stakes, then before the original could be released from the custody of the police, he would file the claim. In one master stroke he would thus secure the claim, fasten the murder of Boyne upon Janier, and forever rid the country of the man he secretly feared, as every crook north of the railways secretly feared him.

Later, after searching Janier, and failing to find the location, and in the face of Janier's coolness and denial of the murder, the officer, his first rage at not finding the paper cooled, really hit upon the right solution, that Nixon had done the killing and had made away with the paper before Janier discovered the body. With this theory in mind he determined to redouble his efforts to fix the crime upon Janier, and decided to await Nixon, who he knew would not now be long delayed.

At almost the same moment that Crowley and Janier started their journey from Boyne's camp to Sussex Lake, Nixon's canoe shot from the mouth of the Icy and beached before the patch of scrub timber that sheltered Babcock's camp. Nixon stepped from the canoe and surprised Babcock who still lay in his blankets though the sun was all of two hours high.

"Hello," cried the latter, blinking owlishly,

"Did you find him? Is he out there with you?"

"Naw, I didn't find him," growled Nixon, "An' what's more, he hain't in the hills."

"Wait a minute, and I'll be out. Meantime you might get breakfast." Nixon kindled a fire, and as he sliced bacon into the pan, Babcock joined him. "Thought you said it would take ten days or two weeks to search the hills?" demanded the man.

"It would, if I hadn't had the luck to run acrost some Huskies that's be'n huntin' in there all summer. They be'n all over the hull range, an' they say there hain't no one be'n in there."

"Well, where do we go from here?" snapped Babcock, impatiently, "I thought you and Janier were so damned sure Boyne was in the hills."

"I was sure of it. That is, that's where I figgered he'd be, headin' the way he was when I last seen him. Guess we'll hit up river an' have a look along Clinton Colden Lake."

"How about Janier?" Babcock asked the question abruptly, his eyes on Nixon's face.

"To hell with Janier! Leave him where he's at." He grinned at Babcock, "I guess you wouldn't be none sorry to see him wastin' his time huntin' them hills fer Boyne. From what I heer'd when youse was talkin', I guess you'd ruther it

would be you than him that found Boyne. The way I figger it, the one that finds him'll have a little bit the edge on the other one with the gal, won't he?"

Nixon's words had an unforeseen effect upon Babcock who flared up angrily: "Yes, damn you, he will! And it's all your fault for being so positive Boyne was in the hills! Janier has probably found him before this! While I've had to sit here and cool my heels waiting for you!"

"What d'you mean, found him?" sneered the other. "Hain't I jest got through tellin' you Boyne hain't in the hills?"

"And, neither is Janier in the hills!" roared Babcock, his anger rising as he pictured Janier already supplanting himself in Boyne's favor.

"Hain't in the hills," repeated Nixon, "Where's he at?"

"Gone up river. Started the day after you left." Babcock stared in surprise at the effect of the announcement on Nixon. The man's leathery face had turned a pasty white, his jaw sagged open, and his eyes assumed a glazed, starey appearance. "What in hell's the matter?" cried Babcock in alarm, "Nixon! Come out of it!"

Slowly the man passed the back of his hand

across his mouth, his eyes blinked, and lost their glassy look, and with a visible effort he pulled himself together: "Canoe ridin' on an empty stummik," he mumbled, "That—an'——"

"And, what?" asked Babcock, as the words faded to silence.

"An'—an'—jest somethin' I was thinkin' about——"

Again the sentence trailed into silence, and Babcock asked impatiently: "What is it? What could you be thinking about that would turn you into a ghost?——"

"Ugh!" the man started violently at the word, and glanced fearfully over his shoulder: "What in hell you got to be talkin' about—ghosts fer?" he asked shakily, "What I meant was like this: You remember when you an' him was talkin' an' he asks you how old man Boyne was fixed, an' you says he's got around a million or so?"

"Yes, go on!"

"Well, I seen the look in his eyes, when he heer'd that, an' I know'd right then if Janier could cop off the gal, Boyne's life wouldn't be worth a damn. That, an' the empty stummik, kind of made me feel—funny."

"You mean that you think Janier would murder Boyne for his money if he got the chance?"

"If he thought he'd git the money, he would. Leastwise, that's what I seen in his eyes."

After a moment of silence Babcock asked: "Didn't you pass anyone coming down the Icy, when you went up?"

"No, why?" asked Nixon, quickly.

"Because Miss Boyne and her guide arrived here the day after you left, I don't see how you could have missed them."

"Probably slipped by when I camped fer dinner. Er mebbe after I'd camped fer the night, er before I'd got started in the mornin'. Where'd they go to?"

"They went up river with Janier, and the next day Crowley came along——"

"Crowley!" cried Nixon in surprise.

"Yes, Crowley. He got wrecked in a rapids, and lost his outfit, and came back a-foot. I filed a complaint against Janier for the abduction of Miss Boyne, and he started right out to arrest him."

"Crowley's goin' to arrest Gus Janier!" cried Nixon, and Babcock noted that for the first time since his announcement that Janier had gone up-river, the man's voice had resumed its natural tone.

"Yes, for abduction. And he said to tell you

when you arrived that he would wait for us either on Sussex Lake, or on the north shore of Clinton Colden."

"Well, why'n hell didn't you say so?" cried Nixon, seemingly in a perfect fever of excitement, "By God, le's git a-goin'!" and, with the words, he leaped to his feet and began hastily to pack the outfit.

CHAPTER XVII

JANIER BREAKS THE NEWS

SEARCHING the ridges and valleys, it had taken Janier and Puk-puk two full days to find Boyne's camp. The return journey, despite the handicap of Janier's manacled hands, was easily made in one.

Toward evening, as they topped the last of the ridges, one from which the lake of their destination was plainly visible, Janier halted and faced the officer. "Crowley, what do you expect to find—down there?"

The officer regarded him with a frown: "If I was to tell you the honest-to-God's truth, an' there ain't no reason why I shouldn't, I'd say, that I don't expect to find nothin' but your canoe, an' a trompled place that looks like a couple of folks has camped there, an' somethin' or 'nother layin' around that could easy be identified as belongin' to Boyne's girl, an' prob'ly a plain trail on the gravel showin' where two folks had broke camp an' shoved off in a canoe."

"You think they've pulled out?" asked Janier, quickly.

The officer grinned: "No, Janier, I don't think they've pulled out. I don't think they ever was there. You see I'm givin' you credit fer bein' smart enough to fix things up so it will look plain as day like they pulled out. I don't think them two will ever be heard from again."

Janier smiled. "Thanks for the compliment, Crowley. At least, you have imagination. As I believe I told you once before, it's too bad the Mounted is about to lose you."

"To hell with 'em!" growled the officer, "When they git holt of a good man they don't know how to use him—jackin' him up all the time fer vi'lation of reg'lations. I'm fed up on livin' like a damn' scollard in a school—an' drawin' boy's wages fer it, to boot."

"There's no question about the inadequacy of the pay," answered Janier. "There isn't a man in the service that doesn't earn ten times over what he draws. But in the present instance, you're goin' to be disappointed. Within a half-hour we'll be in Miss Boyne's camp. And, it is because of that, I want to ask a favor of you."

Crowley glanced toward Janier's fettered wrists, swollen and chafed and bleeding where the steel

handcuffs had bruised them during the travel through swamp and scrub, and in the ascent and descent of ridges. He shook his head: "Nothin' doin'! I don't dare to take a chanct. With some, I might—but not with you."

Janier looked the man squarely in the eye: "Crowley," he said, "I'd see you in hell before I'd ask a favor of you on my own account. What I'm goin' to ask has nothin' whatever to do with these," he clicked the bracelets together. "Sometime I hope to settle that score. But not while you're an officer, an' I'm a prisoner. As a matter of fact, Crowley, Miss Boyne has done me the honor to consent to become my wife. We shall be married within a month. An' the favor I am askin' is merely that you let me break the news to her of her father's death. It's goin' to be a hard blow for her to bear, an' I think that I can make it fall less—abruptly."

"Be married!" cried Crowley, "In a month! By God, Janier, I'll say you're there with the crust! In a month you'll be in jail waitin' to be tried fer the murder of John Boyne, an' a man walkin' up an' down in front of yer cage with a big gun to see that you stay there!" He paused abruptly, and for a full minute stood regarding Janier curiously, apparently thinking—he was thinking—that the

fact of Janier's engagement to the girl could be used as additional motive for Boyne's murder. And the thought pleased him. For he had heard from Babcock of Boyne's million. When he continued, it was to grant Janier's request: "Sure you can tell her. It's a job I ain't hankerin' fer anyhow. Only, you got to do yer tellin' where I can keep an eye on you."

Janier nodded, and the officer grinned: "They seems to be, what you might say, some little misunderstandin' about this here lady's gittin' married."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, 'tain't over three or four days ago Babcock tells me he's the one she's goin' to marry. I was a-goin' to have to arrest you fer abduction, if I hadn't of picked you up fer murder, instead."

"Abduction!" exclaimed Janier. "What do you mean?"

"Yup, Babcock claims you knocked him down an' feloniously run off with the lady which he's guardeen of, agin' the peace an' dignity of Fish River. At that, it was a hell of a wallop you handed him. His eyes looks like a couple of eggplants."

Janier smiled, surprised at the sudden change from Crowley's hateful, domineering attitude to a

lighter, almost facetious mood. The man was more talkative. He continued: "Funny way to court a woman—murderin' her old man, though."

"That's accordin' to the way you look at it," grinned Janier, "Different people have different ways of doin' things. But, you forget that I told you I didn't kill Boyne."

Crowley favored his prisoner with a glance of grudging admiration: "I'll tell the bleedin' world that guts is your middle name! Yessir, Gus Guts Janier! If I was right now in your shoes, with evidence heaped up around me to my ears, an' gittin' higher, believe me, I'd be sweatin' blood instead of standin' there kiddin' the bird that's fetchin' you in to where the rope's at! Facts is, you're takin' it too damn' easy! Look a' here, Janier," he exclaimed, with a sudden show of frankness, "If you didn't kill Boyne, you must have some idee of who did, or you wouldn't be so damn' cool about it. An' if you have, I'll leave it to you, ain't it your duty to tell it to me? If you know who done it, we're losin' a lot of valuable time. If you could prove who done it, spite of the evidence agin you, I'd turn you loose right now, an' own up my mistake, to boot."

Janier shook his head: "I wish I could prove

who did it. Of course, I've got my own good guess, but you wouldn't care about that."

"The hell I wouldn't!" exclaimed the officer, encouragingly, "Didn't I tell you, I was playin' you fer bein' smart. If you've got a guess, le's have it—mebbe I'll see it your way."

"Well," answered Janier carefully weighing his words. "There is the Indian—Boyne's guide. He's gone, an' his outfit's gone, too. Did you think of him?"

Crowley shook his head: "No, but it wasn't no Injun killed Boyne. Most prob'ly the one that did kill him chased the Injun off. If that's the best you can do, I guess I'll jest hang onto you. It wasn't no Injun had that there paper of Boyne's in under the band of his hat."

"I found it when I was lookin' through his outfit for a clue to the murderer."

"Tell that to the judge. Got any more guesses?"

"There's Babcock——"

Crowley laughed: "Worse yet. He couldn't of got down there an' found his way back to his camp in a year's time. I camped with him comin' in, till we met up with Nixon, an' one night he got lost goin' to the spring—an' it not dark yet!"

"The only one else would be Nixon. Do you

know I'd be inclined to suspect Nixon if I didn't know positively that he's up in the Heywoods. A man can't be two places at the same time. So, that lets him out."

"That's right," agreed Crowley, with alacrity, "It couldn't of be'n him, an' it couldn't of be'n Babcock. So it's between you an' the Injun."

"It's the Injun, then," said Janier. "If I were you I'd try to find him, because I don't know any more about the murder than you do."

"Well, you ain't me, so I guess I'll jest hang onto you while I've got you. I can git the Injun any time. Nixon knows him, an' he'll be along d'rictly."

"Be along?" asked Janier, "Where?"

"Right here on Sussex Lake. I left word with Babcock fer them two to come on up as soon as Nixon come back from the Heywoods."

"What do you want them here for?"

"Well, I figgered I'd have you gathered in fer abduction agin they got here, an' I wanted Babcock should go along in an' prefer charges. An' I got to take Nixon in anyhow, so I figgered we'd make one job of it."

"You didn't think Babcock would go on clear to headquarters without finding Boyne, did you, after he's spent all this time hunting him?"

"We'd of had Boyne, all right," answered Crowley, "I know'd if Nixon didn't pick him up in the mountains, it's a safe bet he'd be down here in these ridges, an' we could of located him easy enough."

"It may be a couple of weeks, or more, before they show up," opined Janier, "Especially if Nixon works the whole range himself. We ought to slip back there an' bury Boyne. It isn't right to leave him lyin' there on top of the ground."

"Oh, no, we hadn't!" answered Crowley. "Boyne don't git buried—leastwise, not till he's be'n brung into headquarters. I ain't through huntin' fer the hammer you hit him with, yet. An' when I find it, I want the Inspector should see how nice it fits the hole in Boyne's head. An' I'm goin' to break off that corner of rock that you fixed up, an' show him how nice that don't fit it. The nights is cold, an' if they don't come up a hot spell, he won't keep so bad. Anyhow, I'm goin' to bring him in if he's plumb rotten."

Despite his disgust at the man's words, Janier smiled, grimly, as he struck out toward the camp. He had feared Crowley would leave the body behind. The smile, however, was fleeting, as his thoughts flew to the girl who was even at that moment eagerly awaiting his return—and such a

return! How would she accept the news of her father's death? How could he tell her of it? For a moment he almost wished he had left the telling to Crowley, and the next moment he was cursing himself for a craven, as he thought of Crowley, blunt, and brutal, and boorish. He began to invent phrases in which to break the sad news—stiff, awkward phrases which he discarded even as his lips repeated them. And then, almost before he realized that they were nearing the camp, he heard the voice of the girl:

"Puk-puk!" she cried. Unnoticed, the dog had trotted on ahead. Then, his own name was called. He saw her burst into the little glade, hesitate for the fraction of a second, and then, as she made out the two figures approaching in the twilight, he heard the glad cry with which she sprang forward to meet them. Janier saw all this. He saw her stop short at the distance of a few yards, as her eyes first noted that the man following him was not her father. And he saw the sudden change of features as her eyes met his own—the quick bracing of her muscles, as to withstand a blow—the nervous pressing of her clenched fists against her breast—and the dumb questioning of her eyes. Almost subconsciously, he sensed that Crowley had lagged farther behind. He was very

close to her, now: "My—darling——" the words faltered upon his lips.

She understood. There was a quick, audible ingasping of breath. The eyes that had gazed so searchingly into his own faltered, seemed to widen, like the eyes of a scared child. Then upon his ears fell the sound of her voice, toneless, steady, the words uttered distinctly: "My father is—dead?"

Janier nodded: "Yes, dear, he is dead."

The girl's eyes closed, and her whole body swayed toward him where he stood at a short arm's reach away. Then, suddenly, as his arms did not enfold her, she drew back, lips parted, and stared wildly into his face. Before he could speak, her glance shifted swiftly to his hands which he held crossed before him. With a wild, startled cry she leaped forward, snatched at his wrists, and her eyes dilated as she stared in horror at the encircling gyves.

"It is nothing," he murmured, in a soothing voice. "I am under arrest. A foolish mistake has been made. And I happen to be the victim."

"But—why—Oh, look at your poor wrists!"

"It is nothing——"

"You brute!" she cried, whirling upon the uniformed man, who had come to a stand a few paces in the rear, and ignoring his mumbled retort,

she pressed the bleeding wrists to her lips. "But —why—why did he arrest you?"

Janier's words came almost in a whisper: "For —the—murder of John Boyne."

The girl stared in frozen horror as the blood slowly receded from her face leaving her tanned cheeks an unwholesome pallor. Her eyes closed, she swayed slightly, and despite Janier's ineffectual effort to catch her with his manacled hands, her knees gave way and she sank senseless upon the ground.

Stepping hurriedly to the spot, Crowley stooped as Janier sprang forward: "Don't touch her!"

The officer stared up at him in surprise, and Janier thrust his two hands outward: "Unlock those, damn you!" The words cracked like a pistol shot, and there was that in the man's voice, and in the look of his eyes that caused Crowley instantly to obey. The officer stood erect as Janier shook the loosened steel from one wrist, and with the handcuff dangling from its chain, he slipped his arms about the girl and raised her from the ground. "Keep me covered, if you're afraid of me," he called over his shoulder, and carrying his unconscious burden walked swiftly to the camp and deposited it gently upon the blankets of the little tent.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON SUSSEX LAKE

IRMA BOYNE opened her eyes in the tent. Close beside her squatted Teddy Bye and Bye, in the act of dipping a cloth into a pail of cold water. A moment later the folded cloth was pressed gently to her forehead, and its cool, damp touch felt good to her throbbing temples. She felt strangely dizzy, and weak. Why was she in the tent? Then, suddenly the memory of the events of a few minutes before flooded her brain. She shuddered, and struggled to a sitting posture. "Where is he?" she asked in a half-whisper, as she stared into the stolid face of the Indian.

Teddy Bye and Bye answered in a tone scarce louder than her own: "Gus Janier out dere, by de fire. She say dat bettaire I'm kin put de wataire on you head for wak' you oop. She say mebbe-so you wak' oop an' see heem, you gon' back to sleep som' mor'."

Slowly the girl passed a hand across her eyes: "Oh, what is it all about? Tell me. Teddy Bye

and Bye—there has been some terrible mistake!"

"*Oui*, I'm ain' know not'n 'bout dat. Firs' t'ing I'm com' queek een here an' mak' you wak' oop. Dat beeg mistak', all right, for arres' Gus Janier. I'm ain' know dat p'lice. Gus Janier I'm know."

"But, he's arrested for—killing—my father!"

The Indian seemed unimpressed. He shrugged: "Dat p'lice dam' fool. W'en de time com', Gus Janier she fin' out who keel um—mebbe-so Beeg Mout', mebbe-so Nixon, mebbe-so p'lice, mebbe-so Husky. Som'tam Gus Janier fin' out, an' den—" the sentence closed eloquently in a shrug of meaning.

"Who is this Big Mouth you mentioned?" asked the girl, eagerly.

"De man w'at mak' de beeg talk, an' say you no git een de canoe an' Gus Janier knock hell out of heem. I'm ain' kin t'ink 'bout hees nem."

"You mean Babcock!" cried the girl, her eyes wide with horror as thoughts crowded themselves upon her brain. Babcock, who alone, of all the people in the world, would profit by her father's death! She pressed her fingers to her eyes as if to keep out the picture of his face. After a moment of silence, she spoke to the Indian: "Tell him I want to see him—Gus Janier."

For a long moment the black eyes of Teddy Bye and Bye fixed her own with a gaze so penetrating that it seemed to the girl as though he read her innermost thoughts. Then, as if satisfied, he turned and silently quitted the tent.

When Janier had stepped out of the tent after depositing the girl upon her blankets, he had given the Indian his instructions, and immediately joining Crowley at the fire, had stretched out his hands toward the officer, who shot an inquiring glance into his face.

"Snap it back on," he ordered, curtly.

Crowley hesitated: "Don't mind takin' the other one off fer a little while, long as yer right here where I can keep an eye on you. Kind of rest up yer wrists a little. Hot an' cold water'll ease 'em up. It was pretty rough on you—that trip, but I didn't dare to take a chanct."

Janier shrugged: "Might as well get used to them. We've got a longer trip ahead of us."

Crowley affixed the handcuff, and both seated themselves as the Indian returned with a pail of water and entered the tent.

Ten minutes later the Indian reappeared, halting before Janier: "She wan' for see you," he grunted.

Janier glanced inquiringly into the face of the officer, who nodded: "G'wan in, if you want to.

Jest give me yer word you won't try to start nothin'."

A grim smile twisted Janier's lips: "Thanks, Crowley. We may as well get squared away, right here. For you, personally, I've got no respect whatever. For the uniform you wear, I have the greatest respect in the world. All my life I have respected it, and never before has my respect failed to go deeper than the uniform itself. I give you my word that, no matter how preposterous the charge against me, as long as I am your lawful prisoner, and you are wearing that uniform, I shall neither try to escape, nor shall I commit any attack or assault on you. That's all I've got to say—you can take it, or leave it."

"An' personal," growled the officer, surlily, "I ain't got no more time fer you than what you have fer me. You can go on in there like I said. But I ain't goin' no further than that. This here respect you claim to have might kind of shrink up when you've had time to think of—what's comin' to you."

At the tent door Janier stooped and peered into the gloom-shrouded interior. What would her verdict be? During the ten minutes in which he had sat waiting for the reappearance of the Indian, he had vainly tried to reason what the girl's

attitude would be towards him upon her recovery from the swoon. Bitterly, he realized, she scarcely knew him. Vividly the words with which Babcock had sought to poison her mind against him, recurred to his brain. For a single fleeting moment a smile flickered upon his lips as he recalled his own bitter arraignment of himself back there on Lake Providence.

Did she really love him? Or, was her plighted love but the result of a passing interest he may have created in himself—that, and the wizardry of moonlight? And, if she did love him, would the flame of this young and untried love burn strong, and steady, and clear in the steadfastness of its own confidence and belief in him? Or, would it waver and flare, now this way, now that, under the breath of suspicion, to be snuffed out, to lie dead and cold, or turn even to the fiercer flame of hate fed and fanned by the fierce blasts of accusation and imputation that would soon be visited upon him? For, with the arrival of Babcock and Nixon, he knew, inculpation would be heaped upon him, buttressed by whatsoever of innuendo and evidence that the brains of the three could conceive, and the hands of the three discover or manufacture.

Janier set his lips grimly. He knew his own love for her. By merest accident had his love

been tried and found not wanting. And, in the new-found pride of self that had been his since the moment he folded the half-sheet of paper and placed it beneath the band of his hat, he knew that no slightest measure of lesser love in her would suffice him. One breath of suspicion—one fleeting doubt, and the man knew that their ways must part. He would prove his innocence, would fix the guilt where it belonged. Then—he would go his way, and she would go hers. He, the only loser. For small indeed is loss of doubting love.

He stooped and peered into the tent. From the deep dusk of the interior he heard his name called: "Gus Janier!" The words were hardly more than a whisper yet they sounded upon the man's throbbing eardrums like the tone of a deep-throated bell. His pounding heart thumped faster. Within him a wild surge of gladness struggled to burst its bounds. Never to his dying day would he forget the rapture of that whispered name—the tone of it, the appeal, the unshaken love! Swiftly he dropped to his knees and gained her side, his steeled wrists clicking audibly. Her arms were about him, her lips were upon his, and in that moment Janier knew that the love of this woman had put his own to shame—for had he not questioned that love?

"My darling!" he whispered. And, again: "My darling!" His bruised wrists were in her lap, and as she bent over them, a hot tear dropped upon the back of his hand. He tried, gently, to remove them, but she held them fast. "Wait, dear," she whispered, "I will bathe them. See, here is water," and dipping the cloth that the Indian had left hanging upon the edge of the pail, she applied it to his swollen wrists.

Very gently, with careful attention to detail, but sparing her in so far as possible, he recounted the events of the past three days, omitting only the details of the finding of the paper, and of the tiny loose fragment that he had crowded back beneath the edge of the skull. "So really," he concluded, "In view of the circumstances, you must not be inclined to judge Crowley too harshly."

"Not judge him harshly!" cried the girl, "And he murdered——"

"No! No! Not that! As a matter of fact I am almost certain that he did not do the deed."

"But the claim! You said his name was on the paper."

"Yes, dear. But I did not say it was in his own handwriting. Have patience, darling. Trust me

implicitly, and I promise you that at the proper time I will bring your father's murderer to book. In the meantime, don't mention the claim. Crowley doesn't know your father located a claim. And I am certain that he knows nothing of the second staking, nor of the notice that bears his name."

"I do trust you, dear! But I blame him!" cried the girl impetuously, "He's a clod! I blame him for daring to even entertain the thought that you could have done this thing! But, most of all, I blame him for this!" she indicated the manacled wrists, "Couldn't he have accepted your word of honor that you would not try to escape?"

Janier smiled: "To men of Crowley's stamp, dear, a word of honor means nothing at all."

"You mean, he's——"

"I mean that he is everything that a man, and especially an officer, should not be."

"He's a disgrace to the Mounted!"

Janier shook his head: "No. When you know the Mounted, as I know it—the hundreds of clean, stalwart, upstanding men who are the members of its force, you will realize that no act of any man can, in the slightest measure, besmirch the honor of its name. A member of the force may bring dishonor upon himself, but never upon the Service,

whose worth and sterling integrity is a byword through the whole world."

The girl nodded: "I think I understand," she murmured, "And, now—what?"

"Crowley's plan is to wait here for Babcock and Nixon to join us——"

"Babcock and Nixon!" cried the girl, "Oh, why should they come here? I detest them both! I thought Nixon was in the Heywoods!"

Janier shook his head: "No," he answered, "Nixon is not in the hills. You remember back there on Lake Providence I told you that Nixon did not believe your father was in the hills or he would never have dropped the word that you thought was accidental. Crowley left word with Babcock two or three days ago for them to join him on Sussex Lake as soon as Nixon returned. I look for them here to-morrow."

"And what will they do when they get here? Oh, I am—afraid!"

"You have nothing to fear," reassured the man, "We will all pull out when they arrive, for your father's camp. There the three will endeavor to tighten the chain of evidence against me. Crowley seems to believe that if he could only find the instrument with which your father was killed he would have a clear case against me—un-

doubtedly a hammer, he thinks. Obtaining his evidence, they will take your father's body and proceed to Baker Lake."

"Baker Lake! Why that's way over near Hudson Bay!"

"Yes, but we are much nearer Baker Lake than we are to Fort Norman. And this crime was committed in the territory covered by the Baker Lake detachment of M Division. Crowley works out of Baker Lake, and it is there he must report."

"Oh, it will be intolerable!" cried the girl, "That journey. All of them treating you like a common murderer. Subjecting you to abuse and accusations when they know you are innocent! And, now that Dad is—gone, Babcock will threaten and bully me in every way he can think of."

"Yes, it is going to be hard on you, dear. But it won't last long. It's only four hundred miles, and after we hit the Thelon, it's downstream, all the way. But, it's getting late. I'll say good night, and leave you, now. Tomorrow we may move camp."

"Will he make you sleep with those horrible things on your wrists?" asked the girl.

"I don't know," Janier smiled, "I have never

worn them before, and, really I don't know what the usual procedure is. But, don't worry about me. I don't sleep with my wrists."

"But the discomfort—the torture of it!"

"It's nothing. I'm getting used to them, now. Good night!"

As he joined Crowley at the little fire that the addition of green lush grass had converted into a heavy smudge, Janier was not aware that the girl had followed. She paused beside the officer and pointed to the irons: "Surely, you are not going to leave those on him at night, are you? It would be barbarous!"

Crowley shifted uneasily: "Well, mom, I can't hardly see no other way. It ain't that I want to be harder on him than necessary. The regulations is agin abuse of prisoners. But, then agin, I ain't supposed to take no chances, neither. I sure can't stand guard on him night an' day."

"But," insisted the girl, "It's an outrage! His wrists are swollen and sore, and he'll never be able to lie in a comfortable position with his hands fastened together. There must be some way. I am sure he would give you his word that he will not try to escape."

"Yes, mom. He's give me that already. But —where'd I be at, s'pose he did pull out? What

would the Inspector say when I reported that I'd trusted to a murderer's word——"

"He's not a murderer!" cried the girl, "How dare you——"

"Well, that's what he's charged with, anyhow. If he ain't he can tell it to the judge. But, I got to look out fer my own hide, too." As he talked the man's eyes had fallen before the blazing eyes of the girl, and rested upon the base of a small scrub tree near at hand. Suddenly he looked up. "Tell you what I'll do. It won't be as bad as havin' his hands chained together. I'll leave one of them bracelets on, an' he can lay his bed up agin' that tree, an' I'll pass the chain around an' snap the loose bracelet around it. That'll give him one free hand, an' if he lays close, it won't put no strain on the other one. Then I'll spread my bed beside his'n an' if he wakes up cramped I'll change the bracelet to the other wrist." And, with that the girl had to be content. Thanking the officer coldly, she turned and disappeared within her tent.

CHAPTER XIX

THE START

THE following morning, of his own accord, Crowley removed the handcuffs from Janier's wrists and slipped them into his pocket. "Long as I ain't got nothin' to do but keep an eye on you, you might's well rest up yer arms a little."

Janier thanked him, and breakfast was eaten in silence, after which he and the girl drew aside and found a shady spot that gave a view of the lake, and still remained in full sight of Crowley, who busied himself with keeping the fire going, and feeding it with green stuff which sent a tall column of signal smoke high into the still air.

About the middle of the forenoon a canoe was sighted, skirting the north shore of the lake, and soon afterward the figures of Babcock and Nixon were plainly distinguishable. Crowley walked over to the two, and drawing the bracelets from his pocket, slipped them onto Janier's wrists, ignoring the wrathful glance of the girl.

"Prob'ly have somethin' else to think about fer

a while after them folks gits here, an' I ain't takin' no chances." He addressed the girl: "Now, mom, we're goin' to pull out of here right after dinner. You can come along, or not, jest as you want. We're goin' to hit fer yer paw's camp, an' look around a little, an' then we're goin' to take the corpse along to Baker Lake. You're welcome to come with us if you want to. If you're comin', you better tell yer Injun to git yer outfit ready fer the trail."

"Thank you. I am going with you," answered the girl, and walked away to give the Indian his orders.

Crowley turned to Janier: "I sure wisht there was canoe water somewheres between here an' there," he said. "The way it is we've got to leave the canoes here, an' back-pack acrost the way we come, an' then take a chanct on pickin' up some boats off'n some natives somewheres."

"There's good canoe water almost to Boyne's camp," said Janier, "All we have to do is to paddle to the south shore and portage over into Lake Aylmer which connects with Clinton Colden, an' it's canoe water up to within a mile of his camp."

"Are you sure?" asked Crowley.

"Ask Nixon, if you don't believe it. He knows the country."

"But, he don't know where Boyne's camp is at."

"Don't he? Well, I do. Maybe you'll have to rely on me for your guide. Boyne's canoe is just about a mile below his tent."

"That's where you was the mornin' I caught you, eh? Huntin' Boyne's canoe fer to make a gitaway."

"Yes, that's where I was. You ought to make a note of that, Crowley. Don't forget that anything I say can be used against me. But, here come your friends, maybe we'd better go tell them the news."

"My friends?"

"Yes, you invited them to the party, didn't you?"

"Still got yer nerve with you, ain't you? Wonder if you'll hold it clean up till the time you stretch hemp."

Janier grinned: "I suppose you refer to my hangin'. A most vulgar and inaccurate phrase, Crowley. Hemp don't stretch—that's why they use it."

"Well, I'll be damned," muttered the officer, and moved away, with Janier close behind him.

Hardly had the canoe beached than Babcock was upon the gravel, his features beaming in a broad smile: "Good work, Constable! Good

work! I see you have your prisoner! And handcuffed, too! A wise precaution, Constable, no doubt!" The smile changed to a scowl as he turned upon Janier: "You realize, now, young man, that the long arm of the law reaches even into the wilderness after the abductors of women."

"Abduction, hell!" cut in Crowley, "I gathered him in fer murder."

"Murder!" cried Babcock, his eyes fairly bulging from his head, "You mean—he has—murdered her?"

"No, not her—him?"

"The Indian?"

"John Boyne," answered Crowley, "Caught him red-handed—that is, I picked him up right in Boyne's camp. He killed him the night before, an' he was still hangin' around when I come along the next mornin'!"

Babcock received the news in silence, standing there staring from one to the other of the men who confronted him. Out of the tail of his eye, Janier watched Nixon, who still remained in the canoe. The blood seemed suddenly to have ebbed from the man's sallow face, leaving it a sickly grey, like a face of putty—a death mask, save for the eyes which blinked rapidly, and then burned with an unnatural brightness.

Hearing the voices Irma Boyne hastened to the spot, and took her place close by Janier's side. Sight of her seemed to rouse Babcock from a stupor. Taking a step forward he addressed the girl, his lips twisting into a sneer: "I warned you! I warned you against having anything to do with that man! And, in disregarding that warning you have brought about the death of your father! It's my turn, now. The death of John Boyne reverses the aspect of things. I have asked you to marry me—I have even begged you to. And what was your answer? You insulted me to my face! You have told me, not once, but many times, that you distrusted and despised me. For that you will pay—later. When I get ready to marry you now, I'll tell you so. And you'll come——"

"Just a minute!" the voice of Janier was not raised above its normal tone, yet the words were distinctly audible, even to the man whose voice had risen with his anger. "In addressing Miss Boyne, you will please show the proper respect. It may interest you to know that she has promised to become my wife."

"Your wife!" The words fairly hissed from Babcock's throat. "What do you mean? You—You——" The man, seemingly beside himself

with rage, groped helplessly for a word, and giving it up turned upon the girl, "Irma, what is the meaning of this? What——"

"I think the meaning is perfectly clear. What Mr. Janier just informed you is, that as soon as we can find the proper authorities he and I are going to be married."

"Marry that—that damned murderer!" Babcock's face, seemingly puffed out with excess of blood, showed a mottled purplish red. "You fool!" he cried, glaring at Janier, "You didn't know that in killing Boyne you were playing directly into my hands!" Tearing open his coat he drew from an inner pocket a long flat leather wallet which he shook in Janier's face, as he slapped it loudly with his other hand: "In there is John Boyne's will! All duly signed and witnessed! It's good in any court in the world! Do you hear? It names me as executor, and by its terms I am to administer his estate without let or hindrance, exactly as I see fit! By its terms I am to pay his daughter an annual income—but the amount of that income is left entirely to my own judgment! Does that mean anything to you poor fools? A dollar a year—a penny a year, if I see fit! And I am to handle this estate until his daughter reaches the age of thirty! For the next ten years I, and I

alone will have the handling of this estate. At the end of that time I am to turn over—what's left! I suspected something of this kind, when you asked me back there on the river whether John Boyne was rich! And, I told you then expressly, that I had the handling of this money. But, evidently, you chose to ignore it, or you were too ignorant to grasp what it meant. But, you know now! Or, possibly you intended to murder me after murdering Boyne!"

"He didn't murder my father!" the voice of the girl cut shrill with anger.

The man regarded her with a sneer: "Ah-ha, you persist in the face of overwhelming proof to assert his innocence! It may be that this murder was planned—that you both——"

The sentence ended in a blur of sound. In a flash Janier raised his manacled hands above his head, and as he sprang forward, brought the irons crashing into Babcock's face. The taut chain tearing through the flesh of the man's nose, smashed the bone, while the wrist bands ripped the flesh of his cheeks, so that the blood spurted into the air as he staggered backward until his heels struck the bow of the canoe, which tripped him and sent him crashing backward into the water of the lake, from which he struggled a mo-

ment later, blinded by the blood and water that filled his eyes. Choking, gurgling, he staggered onto the gravel, clawing wildly in an endeavor to draw the revolver from its holster at his belt. Crowley leaped forward, and pushing Janier back with one hand, struck Babcock's hand from the gun, which he promptly secured.

"Quit this damn' fightin'!" he growled, "Or, I'll take an' hog-tie the two of you!"

"Oh, my nose! My nose!" wailed Babcock, prodding at the injured member with his finger, "It's broken!"

"I'll say it is," agreed the officer, "But that don't give you no licence to start no gun-play! This man's my prisoner, an'——"

"But he attacked me!" screamed Babcock, "He broke my nose! I can feel the bones grate!"

"I'll bet them bones feel great! I can see 'em stickin' through. Quit yer howlin' an' belly-achin' an' I'll see what I can do. It was yer own damn' fault. I don't blame him none."

"I'll kill him for that! I'll——"

"You'll shut up!" cried Crowley, thoroughly exasperated, "Or I'll turn his hands loose an' let him finish the job where he left off at!"

When Nixon had finally succeeded in locating

Babcock's medicine kit and procuring therefrom iodine and bandages, Crowley set to work. A needle and thread were requisitioned from Irma, and at the end of an hour Crowley finished.

"I'm 'fraid you ain't never goin' to amount to a hell of a lot fer looks no more. Yer cheeks kind of woppses down like a bloodhound's, an' yer nose is sort of caved in where the bones was, an' slants over at the end. I done the best I could, but they ain't nothin' left to hold it straight. Maybe that'll learn you not to shoot off yer mouth too free after this. It ort to."

When Teddy Bye and Bye called them to dinner, Crowley stepped up to Janier and unlocked his hands.

"What are you doing, Constable?" cried Babcock, his voice sounding strange and unnatural, "I protest against any favor whatever being shown that man! Poor John Boyne," he whined, "I'll send his murderer to the gallows if it costs me every cent I've got in the world."

"I'm runnin' this outfit," Crowley informed him, "An' what protestin' you do, ain't worth a damn, one way or another."

When questioned, Nixon corroborated Janier's statement regarding an easy portage to Lake Aylmer with a continuous water route into Clinton

Colden. Beyond that he was very careful not to commit himself.

While Teddy Bye and Bye was washing the dishes, Nixon managed to beckon Crowley into the bush for a moment. Once sure that they were out of observation of the others, the man tore open his shirt, and with hands that trembled, slipped a thong from which dangled a thin packet wrapped in oiled cloth: "Here," he whispered, hoarsely, "Take this—it's the location!"

"You didn't need to be in no such hurry about it," growled Crowley. "You could of carried it till we got almost in."

"Not by a damn' sight! I've carried it long enough, a-ready! An' you an' Janier both had me sweatin' blood. Damn you, what did you have to go lookin' at my neck fer, first thing. I had to keep my shirt buttoned clean up to keep the string from showin', an' I always wear my shirt open—an' I bet he know'd it!"

"Aw, hell!" growled Crowley, "You lost yer nerve. I never looked at yer neck, an' I bet he never. You jest imagined it. I ain't afraid to carry it. I keep my shirt buttoned, anyhow."

"Say, Crowley, we got him dead to rights, hain't we? God, I'm scairt stiff! I have be'n ever since."

"Sure I got him. You got to help, though. An' that there Babcock, he'll swear to anything, now, to git Janier hung. Jest to cinch matters, you an' him might kind of git together an' see if you can't remember somethin' he said back there in yer camp that might sort of show up agin' him. We got him—but you can't never have too much evidence, at that."

An hour later the outfit was on the way, paddling toward the portage. In the first canoe Janier paddled the bow and Crowley the stern, with Puk-puk between them. Irma and the Indian followed, and Babcock and Nixon brought up the rear, Nixon paddling, and Babcock in the bow, bemoaning his injuries.

CHAPTER XX

CORPORAL DOWNEY GETS A TRANSFER

After leaving Gus Janier at the mouth of Bear River, Corporal Downey proceeded to Fort Norman where he caught the Hudson Bay steamboat up river. At Fort Fitzgerald he found awaiting him a temporary transfer to M Division, with orders to proceed at once and take over the command of Baker Lake Sub-district, until relieved by an Inspector.

"And they'll probably send me some rooky up here to take your place," grinned Inspector Pond. "Confound Sanborn for getting sick!"

"What's the matter with Inspector Sanborn?" asked Downey.

"Didn't hear what it was. Pretty sick, I guess. They took him down to Port Nelson on the *Village Belle.* The Superintendent figures you can proceed to Port Nelson and go up to Baker Lake on the *Nascopie.* She's going north the last of August with a load of coal and supplies for the detachment."

An hour later Downey looked up from the maps spread before him upon the table. "I can beat that by three weeks," he announced. "As long as there ain't anything in the order about how to get there I'll just take a shortcut."

"How do you figure it?"

"Go up to Fort Chipewyan an' get Constable Cross to run me over to Fond du Lac in the launch. From there on I've got canoe water all the way, an' after I cross the divide, it'll be all down hill. I figure the worst I could do would beat the *Nascopie* by three weeks, an' if I have good luck, I can clip off a couple of more weeks."

The Inspector laughed: "Guess you know what you're talking about. I've never been into the country beyond Fond du Lac. Have you?"

The old Corporal nodded slowly, his eyes on the distant sky-line that showed through the screened window: "Yes," he answered, "Once. It was a long time ago." A silence followed the words as Downey's eyes remained fixed upon the sky-line. "I'm minded to see it again," he announced, in a voice that rumbled deep, and low. And by the look in the older man's eye, and by the tone of his voice, Inspector Pond knew that somewhere in the vast solitude beyond Fond du Lac, lay the answer to the mystery of Downey. And, as the

minutes ticked by, and the man's lips remained closed, he knew that the mystery would never be solved. For the solitudes guard well their secrets. The Inspector loved the old Corporal and paid his mood the respect of silence.

At the extreme eastern end of Lake Athabasca, Downey stood upon the shore at the mouth of the river and watched the launch that had landed him diminish to a white speck in the distance. Then he turned and busied himself with the loading of his canoe.

For ten days thereafter he paddled, and poled, and track-lined upstream, and on the eleventh day he portaged across the height of land and slipped his canoe into the waters of a river that flowed to the northeastward. Three days later he landed at noon at the head of a rapid, and ate his solitary meal. When it was finished, instead of stepping into the canoe as was his wont, he left his outfit beside the river and struck out on foot, threading his way through patches of scrub, traversing bald rock ridges, skirting swamp and muskeg, until at the end of two hours he came to a little land-locked lake. Following its shore he ascended the high wooded hill at its eastern extremity and for a long time he stood staring at the remains of a small cabin of logs. The cabin was old, and

the rains of many summers, and the snows and winds of many winters had wrought their havoc with its structure. Two of its walls had fallen and its roof had long since caved in. A four-inch tree had forced its way up through the remains of the rotting roof, and other young trees crowded the two remaining walls crazily awry. Vines, and wild flowers, and thorny bushes grew in what had once been a tiny clearing, and pushing through the tangle, Downey made his way to the point a few yards distant where the hill terminated abruptly in a high bluff that rose sheer from the blue waters of the lake. A few feet back from the edge of the bluff he searched the ground carefully, stooping to part the vines and bushes with his hands. Presently his search was rewarded by the discovery of the low mound of a long-forgotten grave. Very carefully he sought the slab of wood that once had marked its head. He found it, but the slab had long since rotted off at the ground and fallen upon its face, and the decay of years had rendered the deep-burned inscription illegible.

But the Corporal needed not the legend of the burned inscription. For some moments he stood, holding the piece of rotted wood in his hand. He would cut a new slab, and burn the inscription into it, even as it had been burned in this one long

years ago. But—no. "She was his—not mine," he muttered, "An' this one is the work of his hands. It's better—so." And very carefully he returned the rotted slab to the place from which he had raised it. With his belt ax and his knife, he removed the brush and the vines from the mound, and thereafter, he made many trips to the overgrown clearing, digging up wild flowers by their roots and transplanting them upon the grave. When he had completely covered it, he seated himself beside it with his back against a tree, and hours passed as he smoked many pipes of tobacco, and gazed out over the blue waters of the nameless land-locked lake.

The sun had dipped behind a high ridge to the westward when finally he rose and hat in hand, stood staring down at the flower-covered mound. "She'd like it this way if she could know," he murmured, "She used to watch for 'em in the spring. It's a long, long trail to them days on Lashin' Water. The years has passed her by as though she had never be'n, an' in all the world I'm the only one that remembers."

Downey turned slowly away. Overhead a family of night-hawks dipped and wheeled. From far across the water sounded the shrill shriek of the red throated loon. And, as the man passed the

rotting cabin, from the topmost log of its sagging walls a great grey owl flapped noiselessly into the timber.

It was past midnight when the grizzled Corporal sought his blankets at the place where he had left his canoe, and early in the morning he was once more upon the river.

A month later he beached his canoe at the landing before the Baker Lake detachment where he was enthusiastically greeted by Constables Jamieson and Peters who, for six weeks, in the absence of any superior officer, had been carrying on the routine of the detachment in an admirable manner. In addition to securing much deer meat and fish, the two had repaired both of the whale boats and reroofed the building, beside making several patrols to Chesterfield Inlet for the inspection of stores left there by the schooner on her last trip in, and to the Kinipitu village on Quoich River.

"We're sure glad you come, Corporal," grinned Jamieson who had served with the older man in N Division, after Downey had completed an inspection, and approved the condition of building, dogs, stores, transport, and equipment. "You see, when the Inspector jest let go all holts the way he did——"

"What was the matter with him?" interrupted Downey.

"Stroke. We was unloadin' stores, an' he was checkin' 'em off when all of a sudden he staggered a couple of steps an' fell on the gravel. When we got to him he was unconscious, an' he stayed that way fer three days. Then he come to, kind of. But he couldn't say a word, though it looked like he tried, an' it didn't look like he understood nothin' much we said to him. He could move his right arm an' leg, though. So we loaded him onto the *Village Belle* an' sent him down to Churchill. You'll find it all in the reports when you come to look 'em over. But, as I was goin' on to say, the Inspector not bein' able to appoint neither one of us to act in command, an' us bein' both Constables, an' of equal length of service, it come to a question of who should give the orders, an' who should carry 'em out. I claimed we ought to hold an election, an' Peters here he agreed, so we did." The man paused, and with a broad grin Downey urged him to go on:

"I suppose you want me to ask how the election come out. Go ahead. I'll ask."

Jamieson shook his head: "No, Corporal, the election results is in the reports. You see, that first election resulted in a draw, me gittin' one

vote, an' Peters gittin' one vote. An' we've called a sim'lar election every day since, an' sir, would you believe it, every one of 'em has resulted in a draw! Of course, precedin' the votin', we both have done more or less electioneerin' every day, an' the result is that both of us is prob'ly better acquainted with his own bad points, an' his opponent's good points, than any two men in the service. Pendin' a definite result, we've be'n pluggin' along at whatever either one of us thought ought to be done, an' both signin' the reports."

"You two damn' fools!" quoth Downey, when he recovered from his fit of laughter, "I shouldn't wonder if, before I get through with it, I'd have to recommend you both fer promotion. Here I slip in on you boys when you couldn't of be'n lookin' fer anyone in to take command fer at least five weeks when the *Nascopie* comes in, an' I find everything shipshape an' spick an' span as though old Colonel Caruthers was in charge."

"Well," explained Jamieson, solemnly, "That was half on account of the strict discipline I kep', an' half on account of the strict discipline Peters kep'."

"But, there's more than just you two boys here, ain't there?" asked Downey.

"Yes, Dupre's up to Fullerton with three natives puttin' up meat. He ain't due back till the freeze-up. An' Crowley's on patrol west of here tryin' to pick up Amos Nixon fer robbin' some *caches* up on the coast. He's liable to show up anytime. They ain't neither one of 'em be'n here since the Inspector left."

That evening as the three were at supper, an Eskimo beached his *kayak*, and hurrying to the doorway, extended his hand in which was a small scrap of folded paper. Peters took the paper and passed it to Downey, who opened it and read the hastily scribbled lines. One glance into the Corporal's face, and the two Constables knew that the paper carried a message of importance. Downey laid it beside his plate and looked up. "This note is from Gus Janier," he announced. "It says that John Boyne has be'n murdered, after stakin' a claim, an' prob'ly his location papers an' field notes have be'n stolen."

"I'll bet it's some of that damn' Nixon's work!" cried Jamieson. "I wish the Inspector had sent me after him instead of Crowley!"

"Why?" the question came sharply from between Downey's lips.

The Constable moved uneasily in his chair: "Well, I don't like this Nixon——"

"Does Crowley?"

The man hesitated: "I don't know. That is, Corporal, a man can't say for sure whether another man likes anyone, or whether he don't."

Downey nodded: "Possibly the Inspector had a reason for detailing Crowley."

"You mean—" cried Jamieson, quickly. But Downey interrupted the query with a grin: "Constable, a man can't say for sure what another man's reasons are."

"It might of be'n that there Babcock, at that," speculated Peters. "I didn't fancy his looks none, when he went in. He took too much pains to let us fellows know what an all-fired good friend he was of Boyne's."

Downey nodded. Vividly he recollected the words of Irma Boyne on Bear Lake, as she had mentioned Babcock: "Sometimes I wonder if a man really knows his friends." And, again: "I hadn't even thought of worrying about Dad, till I heard Babcock was going in search of him."

"Whoever it is, there's plenty of work for us here," replied Downey. "Jamieson, you've got to hit for Churchill an' get word to every recordin' office in the district to hold anyone fer investigation that files a minin' claim located north of the Thelon. An' Peters will hit out on the trail of

Babcock, an' bring him in. There's work enough fer both of you fer a month or so. I'll stay here an' wait fer Janier. Be ready to pull out in the mornin'."

The following morning as the two Constables were putting the finishing touches on their trail outfits, a canoe was sighted, skirting the shore from the westward. The men watched it with little interest, until it suddenly veered out into the lake, its occupant plying his paddle rapidly, with the evident intention to avoid contact with the men on the beach.

"Kind of funny," commented Downey. "Guess we'd better have a look at him." The Corporal was about to step into his own canoe for the purpose of giving chase, when Constable Peters detained him: "Better let me go get him, Corporal," he advised. "I can rig the outboard motor onto that big canoe, an' bring him in in a jiffy."

"Go ahead, then," ordered Downey, and watched with interest as the motor-driven canoe ate up the distance between itself and the now obviously fleeing occupant of the other canoe. The police canoe drew alongside, and a few moments later its motor started and it began its return trip, towing the other.

The occupant of the other canoe proved to be an

old Indian who stepped surlily out onto the gravel at the officer's command. In vain Downey tried to question him. The man, unknown to any of them, absolutely refused to speak, or to show any sign that he understood a word that was spoken to him, although all three of the officers tried him out with their few words of many different dialects.

"Look at here!" cried Jamieson, who having given up his fruitless questioning, had stepped to the Indian's canoe and was examining its contents. "If that ain't Boyne's rifle, I'm a Dutchman!" He turned to the others, holding the rifle aloft: "Yes, sir, it's a Ross, an' I know it, 'cause when Boyne went in, he let me look it over, an' shoot it a couple of times. There ain't no mistake about that—it's his gun!"

Again the officers tried to question the Indian, and again the man refused to speak. Suddenly reaching out, Downey plunged his hand into the front of the Indian's cotton shirt, and seized hold of a thin packet, wrapped in oilcloth, that was suspended about his neck by a thong. Instantly the Indian sprang into action, clawing, striking, and even attempting to bite the hand that held the packet. He was soon overpowered, however, and the thong which had resisted the pull, was

slipped over his head, and while Jamieson and Peters held him Downey opened the packet.

It was a location notice, and field notes signed by John Boyne!

"I guess that kind of changes our plans a little," said Downey, a puzzled frown contracting his brow, "At that, there's somethin' damn' queer about this. Somehow, in spite of what we've found—this don't look like an Injun job."

"I guess, Jamieson, you an' me better take the big canoe in the mornin', an' that there sputter engine, an' head up the Thelon an' see what we can find. Peters'll stay here an' herd the Injun."

CHAPTER XXI

ON THE TRAIL

At the south end of Sussex Lake, Babcock stepped from his canoe at the same moment that Puk-puk leaped from the canoe that had beached beside it. At the sight of the dog, which apparently had until the moment escaped his notice, Babcock cursed and reached for the gun Crowley had neglected to return to him. He turned to the officer who was just stepping from the canoe, and in a voice shaking with fury, demanded his gun.

"What you want of it?" asked Crowley.

"Want of it?" roared the man, "Primarily I want it because it's my property. Specifically I want it to kill that damned vicious brute with!"

"You kill that dog, an' I'll kill you," said Janier, quietly, fixing the man's blazing eyes with a steady stare.

"Cut out this here wranglin'!" commanded Crowley. "I told you back there I was runnin' this outfit." He turned to Babcock: "You mind yer own business. You'll git yer gun when I

git ready to give it to you. An' that'll be when we hit the detachment. You ain't no fit party to be packin' a one-handed gun, nohow."

"But—you heard him threaten me! Once a murderer, always a murderer! He threatened just now to murder me! I demand that that man be handcuffed and kept in irons till he's turned over to the proper authorities!"

"I'll say he threatened you," agreed Crowley, "An' he'll prob'ly make good his threat, too—if you don't quit shootin' off yer mouth. An' as fer the rest of it, he's right now in the hands of the proper authorities—meanin' me. An' besides which, I don't need no advice from you about how to handle him. What I'd ort to do would be to gag you an' handcuff you fer yer own good."

"I'll report you at headquarters for this insult!" cried Babcock.

"Report an' be damned," growled Crowley. "What I'd be doin' if I was in your shoes, an' what you ort to be doin', is helpin' all you can, instead of hinderin'. You claim to be such a good friend of Boyne's, an' here I've got the man that killed him, an' got to take him better'n four hundred miles, an' instead of helpin' you're makin' the job that much harder."

Somewhat mollified at the words, Babcock sub-

sided, and a few minutes later, even deigned to help Nixon with the unloading of the canoe.

"This here's a three- or four-mile portage," announced Crowley, when the canoes had been drawn up onto the gravel, "An' it's goin' to take three trips to make it. If everyone digs in, though, we can finish up the job by night."

At the Lake Aylmer end of the portage, firewood was collected, and at Crowley's suggestion the girl remained to prepare supper while the men returned for another load. Babcock at once volunteered to remain and help, pleading the physical agony of his wounds as an excuse from further pack service.

"If he stays I don't," promptly announced the girl, and Crowley turned upon the man with a grin:

"There's yer answer," he said, tersely, "Come on."

Babcock's face flamed: "You seem to forget, Crowley, that I am not subject to your orders. Nixon, and that—murderer are your prisoners, and as such are subject to your orders. If Miss Boyne sees fit not to remain here, that is her affair. For my part, I am going to stay right where I am. You can order your prisoners about, but you can't order me."

Crowley stalked over to the man who had

stretched himself comfortably upon the ground: "In my judgment it's necessary that I save all the time I can in bringin' these prisoners into detachment. Which bein' the case, someone's got to stay here that can cook a meal of vittles—an you can't boil water. Seein' how the rest of us is needed fer packin', the lady has offered to stay an' git the supper. Likewise she jest now says that if you stay here she won't. Some folks has got sense enough not to hang around where they ain't wanted. You ain't. You jest got through tellin' me I couldn't order you around because you ain't my prisoner. From now on, that argyment won't work. Git up! Yer under arrest!"

"Arrest!" cried Babcock, scrambling to his feet, "This is an outrage! What do you mean? What am I under arrest for?"

"Fer interferin' with an officer in the performance of his duty. I guess that'll hold you."

Babcock managed a grimace that passed for a smile: "Oh, come, Crowley. I'll go along with you, now that you've asked me. But, as to the arrest, of course that's a joke."

"A joke, is it? Well, the joke's on you, then. An' time you git to detachment an' have to answer to the charge, you won't think it's such a hell of a joke. An' what's more, I didn't *ask* you

to come along—I *told* you to. If yer face is so damn' sore you can't do no packin', you can come along out on the trail a ways, an' I'll handcuff you to a tree, same as I would any other prisoner I want to hold, an' you can lay there an' laugh at yer joke."

Two trips were made, during both of which Babcock elected to carry a pack rather than submit to being handcuffed to a tree, as Crowley had threatened.

For two days the occupants of the three canoes paddled steadily eastward, holding to the north shore of Aylmer and Clinton Colden. It was well toward evening when Janier, who was paddling the bow of his own canoe, with Crowley in the stern, ceased paddling at a point that marked the mouth of a deep bay that reached to the northward.

"I shouldn't wonder if Boyne's creek empties into the lake at the head of this bay," he observed. "What do you think? Have we made far enough east?"

"You know the country better'n what I do," Crowley replied, "Seems like we've come fer enough. Le's ask Nixon."

The other canoes were soon alongside and very guardedly Nixon agreed that if the officer and his

prisoner had made it overland in one day's walk, and allowing for irregularities of shoreline, and the enforced southing, that in his opinion the two days' paddling should put them just about south of Boyne's camp.

"How fer is his camp from the lake?" asked Crowley, as the canoes headed up the bay.

"I don't know," Janier answered. "All I know is that Boyne's canoe lies about a mile south of his camp. I explored a little farther and could just make out the lake in the distance, when I returned that morning and found you waiting in Boyne's tent. I should say, not more than six or eight miles."

Camp was made that night on a stretch of shingle near the mouth of the small river that, as Janier had expected, was found to flow into the head of the bay.

"Some Huskies be'n campin' here lately," opined Nixon, as he studied the sign on the gravel, managing at the same time a glance into Janier's face out of the tail of his eye.

Janier examined the sign: "Yup. Had an *umiak*. Been gone about two or three days."

"Had a *kayak*, too," furthered Nixon. "Must of be'n anyways three men, an' their *klooches*."

"Yup. Caught some fish, an' a caribou fawn.

Looks like they camped here several days." Janier noted the observation put Nixon rather ill at ease, and continued: "Probably hunted back from the lake quite a way. Wonder if they happened onto Boyne's camp?"

"How do you s'pose I know what they happened on? You'd ort to know if anyone does," growled the hooch-trader, and with this parting shot he picked up an ax and attacked a dead spruce.

Leaving Irma and the Indian in camp the following morning, the other four set off up the creek on foot. An hour's walk brought them to Boyne's canoe where it lay at the head of the creek's navigable water, and a few minutes later they were at the camp, where Janier noted the single quick, nervous glance that Nixon cast toward the place where Boyne's body lay, screened by the intervening scrub.

Babcock immediately busied himself collecting the dead man's scattered papers and notes which he deposited carefully in the wallet that contained his copy of the will. "Where is my poor friend's body?" he asked, in a voice unsteady with emotion.

"You'll git a chanct to see it, d'rectly," answered Crowley. "Me an' Janier's goin' to git it wrapped up the best way we can, while Nixon

skuttles around in the brush an' tries to locate the hammer he was killed with."

"How do you know it was a hammer?" asked Babcock.

"Tell by the shape of the hole in his head," answered Crowley, "One side of it, I figger, is curved about right to fit the nose of a hammer. It was a hammer, all right, whether we find it or not. I'd like to find it, though, fer evidence."

Nixon disappeared in the bush, and carrying a pair of Boyne's blankets and his tarpaulin, the three walked to where the body lay under its blanket.

"Ah, yes, it is my poor friend," moaned Babcock, staring down into the upturned face that, despite the cold nights, and the shaded place where it lay, had already begun to blacken. "Ah, John, John! My poor, poor friend. But, I swear upon your dead body, John, that your murderer shall never reap any benefit from his foul crime! I swear that I shall leave no stone unturned to bring the fiend to the gallows! And, to think that your own daughter, if not actually in collusion, at least is in thorough sympathy with the man whose arm struck the cowardly blow that felled you! But—I'll teach the brazen jade——" The words ended in a sudden shriek of fear as he

staggered backward, his arms guarding his bandaged face. With all his weight, Crowley had thrown himself upon Janier, who at the man's words, had leaped toward him with fist doubled for a long swing. The Constable succeeded in staying off the blow by pinioning Janier's arms with his own. A moment later Janier spoke:

"All right, Crowley. I won't hit him. Let me go. You've got my word for it."

The officer hesitated just a second, and releasing the man, whirled upon Babcock: "You keep your damn' mouth shut from now on, if you don't want it knocked clean into the back of yer head! I got somethin' else to do besides keep him from knockin' yer fool head off. An' believe me, I've stopped him the last time. If you go shootin' off yer mouth from now on, he can go as fer as he likes fer all of me. You're twict as big as he is, anyhow. An' if you was half a man you could look out fer yerself. Mind you, now—any more talk like that, an' I'm goin' to be lookin' the other way when the fireworks starts."

Babcock returned to the tent, and Crowley and Janier set about wrapping the body in blankets and binding the tarpaulin closely about it with many winds of babiche line.

With the task nearly completed, both were

startled by a yell of exultation from Nixon who had been absent in the bush for an hour. A moment later the man burst out of the scrub waving a hammer aloft. "I got it! I got it!" he cried, and stopped short at sight of the canvas-wound body upon which the two were just pulling taut the finishing hitches. For an instant he stood irresolute, then with an effort he advanced. "Here it is, Crowley. Take the damn' thing. Look—you kin see where the blood's dried on the head, an' here on the handle."

Crowley took the hammer and examined it.

"Quite a lot of blood," observed Janier, dryly, looking over the officer's shoulder. "It must have spurted out just the instant he was struck. Kind of funny, too, when you come to think about it."

Crowley scowled, and Janier thought Nixon's face went a shade whiter under its tan. The officer was quick to speak: "Huh, that blood never got on there when he was hit. What he done—what you done, Janier—was to lay the hammer down where it got blood on it, an' then happened to think to throw it away afterwards. Where'd you find it, Nixon?"

"Back here in the scrub a ways. Jest a nice throwin' distance from here. Come on, I'll show you."

The two accompanied Nixon, Crowley carefully pacing off the distance. "Look, it laid right there, you kin see where the head hit, an' then it bounded to here."

Crowley made notations in his book, and giving the hammer into Nixon's custody, he and Janier walked back and lifted the body onto a litter which they improvised out of a blanket and a couple of small spruces.

Babcock's suggestion of packing all Boyne's effects down to the lake, was curtly turned down by Crowley: "We got enough stuff to pack as it is, with this here corpse on top of the rest of it. I hope to God they ain't no long portages between here an' the Thelon."

"Only one portage," said Janier, "An' that one isn't over a mile-and-a-half."

"Mile-an'-a-half!" cried Nixon. "If the portage from Clinton Colden to the head of the Hanbury ain't six mile, I'll eat it!"

"Sure, if you go that way it's a six-mile portage," grinned Janier. "But I haven't gone that way in a long time. I found a short-cut a couple of years ago—a river that heads not over a mile-and-a-half from the head of the north branch of the Hanbury—good canoe water all the way, too."

"I be'n in the country goin' on twenty-six year, an' I never found no sich river," growled Nixon, "But, if it's there, it's there. I don't claim to know it all."

Boyne's body was deposited in his own canoe, and while Babcock and Nixon continued to the lake on foot, Janier and Crowley worked the canoe down the little river, and secured it a short distance above the mouth, where it was screened from camp by overhanging willows.

In the late evening Janier accompanied Irma to the spot, and for a long time the girl stood looking silently down upon the canvas-shrouded form. "Oh, can't I see him—just once more?" she faltered.

Janier shook his head: "No, dear, I think you would best remember him as you last saw him."

"Yes, you are right. But, oh, if I could only have known—could have foreseen—I would have made him take me with him." Tears, the first Janier had seen her shed since he told her of her father's death, streamed unheeded from her eyes. He sought to comfort her:

"But, darling, he died where he would have willed to die—in the wild country that he loved. Instantly, painlessly, he stepped in the full strength and vigor of him, from the known into

the unknown. It is as I should want to die—quickly, and in some far place." He leaned closer and whispered, "And now, dear, I shall leave you alone—with him."

She shook her head, and Janier felt her hand clasp tightly about his own: "No, don't leave me—please. You are all I have, now. And—I need you so." And in the long silence that followed, as they two stood hand in hand upon the bank of the little nameless river, there was forged between them a bond of perfect understanding—a bond which time, nor the vicissitudes of time, should never sunder. And then, still hand in hand, they walked back to the camp on the shore of the lake.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PASSING OF CONSTABLE CROWLEY

Crowley gladly accepted Janier's offer, next morning, to paddle, single-handed, the canoe containing Boyne's body. This arrangement left Janier's canoe for Crowley, as with four canoes instead of three, much better speed could be made because of lighter loading.

The river of which Janier had spoken was only a few miles to the eastward, and by noon they had negotiated several miles of its ascent. That night they camped at the portage, and the following morning found them upon the Hanbury down which the canoes shot toward the Thelon, only sixty miles away.

The events of the following five days arranged themselves into a routine unbroken by any incident of note. Each evening the outfit would camp, and after supper Janier and Irma would withdraw a little way from the group about the fire, and talk of days past, and of days to come. Teddy Bye and Bye would wash the dishes and roll up in his

blankets, and the other three would sit beside the fire engaged in conversation, which, for the most part, consisted in arrangement and correlation of the evidence against Janier. Then, the girl would disappear into her tent, and Janier would arrange his bed so that Crowley could shackle him to a convenient sapling.

Each morning, after breakfast, the canoes would be loaded and Crowley would step into Janier's canoe and push off. Janier would follow in Boyne's canoe, with Puk-puk in the bow and the body of the prospector amidships, and the other two canoes would follow in the order of their readiness.

At times, upon the river, Crowley would paddle abreast of Janier, but generally he kept well in the lead. A poor canoeman himself, he knew that should Janier obtain a lead, he could easily outdistance him should he choose to escape.

On the sixth day they entered Beverly Lake and at noon camped where two long points jutted out into the water. Janier noticed that during the preparation of the noon meal, Nixon disappeared, to return at the end of a half-hour with his faded blue eyes a-sparkle, and his breath reeking of liquor. Thereafter Crowley made three or four surreptitious trips into a thick patch of scrub close

beside the camp, waxing each time more and more loquacious, despite numerous furtive digs in the ribs from Nixon's elbow. After the fourth trip Nixon took matters into his own hands, to the extent that he, too, disappeared into the scrub, and when he returned Janier, out of the tail of his eye, saw him stow a flat package into his duffle bag.

Crowley was plainly, and evidently drunk. And Janier's lips tightened as he interpreted Irma's half-frightened, half-inquiring glances. He managed to whisper a few reassuring words into the girl's ear, nevertheless it was with a distinct sense of relief that he heard the officer's thickly uttered command to get under way. Crowley sober, could be anticipated. But Crowley drunk —Janier did not know, and his glance rested with apprehension upon the two big revolvers that protruded from their holsters in Crowley's belt. Crowley had not returned Babcock's gun and the two weapons made a rather ominous display as the officer removed his coat before stepping into the canoe.

The start was made without incident and the first of the two points rounded. The canoes rocked in the waves as they stood across the mouth of the bay, and headed for the lee of the second point which was merely a bare gravel bar

that protruded much farther into the lake. It was while partly within the shelter of this bar that Janier saw Crowley, who was several rods in advance, suddenly stop paddling. At the same instant there came to his ears the regular put, put, put, put, of the exhaust of an out-board motor. The sound seemed to come from beyond the low-lying point. The next instant Janier broke into a broad grin. Crowley was standing up in his canoe trying to peer over the point. The inevitable happened. And Janier laughed aloud as the canoe ahead of him careened on a wave, with Crowley vainly clutching the air to regain his balance. The next instant the light craft dipped suddenly to the opposite side and the Constable struck the water with a splash, as the canoe, shipping a bucket of water, shot forward and came around bobbing in the trough of the waves.

"Best known remedy for his ailment," chuckled Janier, as he watched the water for Crowley's reappearance, expecting to see him strike out for the gravel spit which was not over ten rods distant. But Crowley did not appear. Janier's face went suddenly grave as he dug his paddle into the water and forced his canoe to the spot with long powerful strokes. Behind him he could hear cries, as the canoe of Nixon and Babcock hurried

to the spot. In vain Janier searched the surface of the water. The hat which Crowley had borrowed from Babcock floated soggily in the wake of the drifting canoe, but of Crowley there was no trace. It was three or four minutes before the other canoes reached the spot. Babcock had dropped his paddle and was clutching the gunwales as he stared in speechless horror into the water. In the stern Nixon was babbling frantically, "We got to git him! We got to git him!"

Janier shook his head: "It's too late, I expected every minute to see him come up."

In the excitement of the moment the sound of the exhaust was forgotten. Unnoticed a big canoe rounded the point and was almost upon them when Janier looked up and found himself staring into the face of a man who regarded him with twinkling eyes.

"Downey!" he cried.

The officer grinned: "I took you by surprise for once in my life, Gus—an' right out in the open, too."

"You win a barbed wire crown. But——"

"An' here's Nixon!" exclaimed Downey, "Well, well! But, where's——" Something in Janier's face caused the officer to pause abruptly.

Janier pointed to the empty canoe, bobbing on

the waves a quarter of a mile away. "Crowley," he said, "He tried to stand up in his canoe to see over the point when he heard your exhaust, and he fell overboard, and sank like a rock."

"You mean, he's drowned!"

Janier nodded: "Unless he's got gills, he is. He's been under about ten minutes. I've heard they always come up—but he didn't."

"Crowley couldn't swim," imparted Jamieson from the stern.

"Where'd it happen?" asked Downey, "Did you mark the place?"

"Near as I could mark it he was about ten rods offshore, an' just opposite that round boulder. We've drifted down fifteen or twenty rods."

"Run ashore, everybody, an' we'll see if we can locate him," ordered Downey. When they had beached, he ordered Jamieson to start his motor and retrieve the floating canoe.

No sooner had they landed than Babcock rushed up to Downey who was muttering words of clumsy condolence to Irma Boyne. "Arrest that man!" he cried, pointing to Janier, "Crowley had him under arrest for the murder of John Boyne. We've got the evidence. We were bringing him in, when Crowley met with his accident!"

Downey eyed the excited man coolly. "Oh, *we*

was? Well, jest hang onto yourself fer a minute, an' I'll remind him of it." He called over his shoulder to Janier, who with the aid of Teddy Bye and Bye, was pulling the canoe containing Boyne's body farther up onto the gravel. "Say, Gus, this party here wants I should remind you you're under arrest fer—Let's, see, what was it you claimed Crowley had him arrested fer?"

"Murder!" roared Babcock, flushing angrily. "For the murder of John Boyne. And, if you're not mighty careful, officer, I shall report your attitude to the proper authorities!"

" 'Fer murder,' he says, 'an' if I ain't careful he's goin' to report my attitude to the proper authorities.' "

Janier grinned: "Yup. Be'n chained up every night like a mean dog. Did he tell you about himself? Crowley had him under arrest for interferin' with an officer in the discharge of his duties."

"A trumped up charge! Absolutely preposterous!" growled Babcock.

Downey shook his head: "Neither one in the manual," he said gravely, "Guess we'll have to stick to 'interferin' with an officer.' "

"An' here's Nixon! How about you, Nixon?"

"I'm a witness agin' him," he explained, pointing to Janier.

"Oh! Is that all Crowley was bringin' you in fer? He must of fergot what he went after."

"Oh, yes—them Ar'tic *caches*. Yes, he arrested me fer that. I'll put up bail fer that, though, an' stand trial." He approached and whispered to Downey: "Say, Downey, Crowley, he agreed to recommend I should git easy bail, on account I'm goin' to give a lot of valuable evidence agin' *him*." He pointed toward Janier.

"He did, eh. Say, don't blow yer breath so clost to me. My pipe's lit. Where'd you git it?"

"Git what?" asked Nixon backing away in sudden alarm.

"That hooch you be'n guzzlin'. Come on, quick! Out with it."

"Oh, that. It's jest some I had left out of a little bottle I got up on the coast off'n a feller."

As the man spoke, Downey stepped to a canoe, and tossing a duffle bag onto the gravel produced a flat quart bottle about one-third full. He turned to Janier: "Where'd he git this, Gus?"

"Out of a *cache* about a mile back here. We camped at noon an' he slipped out to the *cache*. Guess it's the one Puk-puk an' I located last year down on the Kazan. Crowley reported that it had been moved when the Inspector sent him down after it."

"It's a damn' lie!" cried Nixon. "I don't know nothin' about no *cache!* If they's a *cache* back there it's his'n! He'll turn it up to frame me! An' what's more if you put a licker charge on me, I won't tell what I know, an' you can't never convict him without I do!"

"Maybe not," admitted Downey. "But, it's 'liquor in prohibited territory' fer yours, on top of the *cache* robberies." He stepped before Nixon and held out his hand: "Yer gun," he demanded, "Just reach in under yer shirt an' hand it over. Crowley was plumb careless he didn't take it when he arrested you."

With a scowl, Nixon handed the gun over. "He figgered I wasn't goin' to try to make no gitaway, an' in case Janier did, it was better two of us should have a gun," he explained, surlily.

Janier, who had stepped close, reached out his hand: "Let's see that gun, Corporal. It looks like one I lost——"

"Lost, hell!" cried Nixon. "You never seen that gun! I've had that gun better'n ten year! Got it off'n Cap Uppus, of the old *Clara B.*"

"That's funny," said Janier, turning the revolver over and over in his hands and examining it critically. "You sure you've had it ever since?"

"Course I've hed it ever since! They hain't

be'n a damn' minute sence that I hain't hed it right onto me. They hain't no one never hed holt of it but me."

"You haven't loaned it to anyone—lately? Even for a short time?"

"No, damn you, I never loant it to no one! Not lately, nor no other time! That there gun hain't never be'n off'n me fer no purpose—not no time. Do you git that through yer head?"

"Yes," grinned Janier, "I think that's fairly clear. Maybe it isn't the gun I mean. Anyway, I won't lay claim to it. It's a good gun, though. Been well taken care of, for a gun that's been carried ten years, hasn't it Downey? Looks good as new. All except that little sliver that's split off the butt. That's one trouble with these wooden butt plates, they will split off, now an' then. Here it is, Downey. I'd take good care of it, if I were you. It would be a shame to get it all scratched up, after Nixon has taken such good care of it."

Downey took the gun without comment, and turned to Jamieson who had landed with Janier's canoe in tow. "Better rig up some kind of a drag, while me an' Gus paddles out an' tries to locate Crowley's body. We'll yell if we find it. The water's clear an' we ought to be able to locate it.

The wind's gone down quite a bit. An', by the way, if you come out with the drag better bring Nixon along. He might try a getaway. He's under arrest, an' so is the bunged-up man, an' Gus, too. If business keeps up like this, we'll have to requisition a jail fer Baker Lake."

"I've got a spinner with big hooks in my outfit," said Janier, "That'll make a good grapple. We can take my canoe."

They pushed out from shore and Downey leaned out over the bow with his eyes close to the water while Janier paddled slowly back and forth over the spot where Crowley went down. "There he is!" cried Downey, and stopping the canoe, Janier reached behind him, and procuring the trolling line, passed it to the officer who lowered the spinner with its three gang hooks to the bottom, and with motions of his hand directed Janier, who paddled the canoe slowly ahead. A moment later the line went taut and the Corporal hauled it in, hand over hand. When the body came to the surface Downey grasped the shirt, and Janier headed for shore.

"What was all that talk about Nixon's gun, Gus?" he asked, "I know you was talkin' to me, but I didn't quite get it."

"Oh, nothin', much—only you ought to take good

care of it so it don't get nicked up, any, that's all."

Downey grinned: "All right, Gus. Say, you don't s'pose that no-count brindle houn' of yours could find Nixon's hooch *cache*, do you?"

"Well, barrin' the fact that he's neither no account, nor brindle, nor a hound, I think he might. Let Jamieson keep his eye on Nixon, an' we can take the motor an' run over an' see."

The body of Crowley was lifted ashore and covered with a blanket, and leaving the others, Janier called Puk-puk and followed Downey to the big canoe. As he was about to step in, he spoke to the Corporal: "You wouldn't mind if I asked Miss Boyne to go with us, would you, Downey? She despises Babcock, an' he never loses an opportunity to annoy her."

"Sure, ask her to come. Don't know's I blame her none, fer not likin' him. By the way, Gus, looks like he'd kind of met up with an accident of some kind."

"Um-hum—only it wasn't exactly an accident. Fellow hit him."

"Must of hit him with one of these here rotary snow-plows, didn't he?"

"No, the fellow was handcuffed, an' he didn't stop to remove his jewelry." And, as Janier called to the girl, Downey chuckled.

Landing at the noon camp site, the three struck into the bush and soon came upon a rotting cabin which they explored minutely without finding a trace of the liquor *cache*. "Too sharp to plant the stuff here," said Downey, "Prob'ly uses this cabin fer a marker."

"He had it *cached* in an old igloo on the Kazan," said Janier.

"That's where he learnt his lesson, then. We might hunt fer a week an' not locate it."

"Not with Puk-puk on the job. Come on, Puk-puk! See what you can find!"

The great dog bounded away, and for a quarter of an hour the three circled slowly through the scrub. "He's off catchin' him a rabbit," chaffed Downey, "Or maybe he's snuck back to the canoe fer a nap."

"You wouldn't want to bet many month's pay he won't find the *cache*," grinned Janier, "Here he comes, now." The dog rushed up to his master and wagging his tail with every evidence of delight, started off through the scrub. The three followed to a pile of brush and poles, a few rods away where Puk-puk stood looking down into a hole from which he had pulled the covering of brush. Throwing himself onto his belly, Janier reached in and after some heaving and tugging, withdrew a

keg. "Same stuff," he said, pointing to a faint cross scratched upon the end. "I marked 'em when I found 'em before."

"Pretty good booze houn', Gus," appraised Downey. "What'll you take fer him?"

Quick as a flash came the answer. "I'll trade him to you, Downey, for that old malamute that you're payin' board for down at Fort Resolution, an' that old horse that you've got out on good pasture at Regina." And at the answer, Corporal Downey grinned, broadly.

With his belt ax Downey demolished three of the kegs, and shouldering the fourth for evidence, led the way back to the beach.

"I haven't figured out how you happened to be way over in here," said Janier, as the officer lowered the keg carefully into the canoe. "Last time I saw you you were headin' up the Mackenzie."

"Inspector Sanborn had a stroke an' they shoved me over here for a sort of stop-gap till they can send in a regular Inspector."

"How'd you come across?"

"Fond du Lac an' the Dubwant."

"Brought you out right here onto Beverly Lake. Have you been down to Baker Lake, yet?"

"Yes, hadn't no more'n got there than the

Husky showed up with your message. Then, an Injun come through that tried to slip past us. We gathered him in, for luck, an' found he had Boyne's rifle, an' his location an' field notes. Wasted a couple of days tryin' to make him talk, an' then left him with Peters an' come on up here."

"An Indian!" cried the girl, "Oh, do you think——"

Janier interrupted her: "No, dear. The Indian is old Nenikna. He'll talk to me. He has been your father's guide since he fired Nixon. What happened, I think, is this: Your father made duplicate copies of his location and field notes. One copy he gave to Nenikna and sent him down to file, while he kept the other copy with him, intending to follow after completing his work here. He probably instructed Nenikna not to talk, nor to show the paper to anyone."

"You say there was two of these notices, Gus? Where's the other one?"

Janier met the other's eyes squarely: "I don't know—for sure. I think we can find it—later—if we want it."

"But, how do you know what Indian this is? And that he was my father's guide?"

"Nixon told me he had an Indian for a guide,

and when I was looking around your father's camp I found a glove that I gave Nenikna last year."

"Oh, I think it's wonderful!" cried the girl, "The sureness and certainty with which you men draw conclusions from the merest trifles. Why, to most men the finding of an old glove, or the dead ashes of a fire, or any one of a hundred other details, would mean nothing at all!"

"There ain't nothin' wonderful about it, Miss Boyne," explained Downey, "Most men don't need to take notice of such things, an' they ain't trained to see 'em. Take the average man right out of a city an' put him up here where he had to go on his own, an' in a year's time he'd be doin' jest like we do, an' think nothin' of it. On the other hand, take me or Gus, here, an' put us in a city, an' we'd be just as bad off as the city man would be here, till we'd had time to learn the ropes."

"Oh, but the bigness of it all—the distances you travel—and the work you do—the places you see that no white man has ever seen before—the suffering you relieve."

"Yes, Miss Boyne, I know what you mean. But there ain't many folks from the cities that can see it that way. You can see it, because you can't help but see it. It was born in you. Your

father before you loved the wild country. It's in your blood. I knew it the first time I saw you, up on Bear Lake——"

"Bear Lake!" cried Janier, "You—you met Miss Boyne on Bear Lake! Just before you saw me—an' you never told me!"

Downey smiled: "No, I didn't tell you. Fact is, Gus, I kind of wanted you to come over here. You see, knowin' her father was over in here, an' her mentionin' about this Babcock, an' you're tellin' me about meetin' up with Nixon, an' all—I sort of figured someone ought to be on the job that could kind of keep an eye on things. I was due back to Fort Fitzgerald, so I couldn't come."

"But, surely," laughed the girl, as her eyes flashed to Janier: "He is not such a woman-hater as that, is he?"

Janier's arm slipped about her waist, and Downey smiled: "Lookin' at him from here I'd say maybe not. You see, Miss Boyne, I've know'd Gus, boy an' man, since about a year before he learnt to walk. An' I wasn't takin' no chances. I know'd he'd come over here if I wanted him to as long as it was jest to git a line on a bunch of men. But, if he know'd there was a lady in it, I wasn't so sure. I figure the simplest way to get

a thing done is generally the best way, so what's the use of complicatin' matters?"

"Just the same, old-timer," smiled Janier, "I know now what you meant when you said you had a hunch that I was goin' to find something at the foot of the rainbow. I puzzled quite a lot about that before I gave it up—but, now, I know."

Downey nodded, gravely: "I kind of thought you'd reason it out, Gus—give you time. Hunches generally works out—if you play 'em right."

"Yours did, anyway. We're going to be married at Churchill."

"I'm glad, son," said Corporal Downey, simply. "D'you know ever since I left you there on Bear River I kind of hoped it would work out that way. But, you won't be goin' outside—fer good?"

"No, indeed!" cried the girl, "This is our country, and we love it!"

The old officer turned upon Janier, almost gruffly: "It's a big woman that can say that—after what she's be'n through. Jest you remember that, boy—to the longest day you live." Turning abruptly, Corporal Downey stepped into the canoe, and a moment later the silence was shattered by the noise of the exhaust.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INVESTIGATION—BABCOCK

MUCH to his disgust, Nixon was ordered to ride the bow of the big canoe, with Downey at the motor in the stern, and the body of Crowley amidships. Jamieson took Nixon's place with Babcock. Janier's canoe was *cached* and the others were distributed as before. The three smaller canoes were secured tandem fashion behind the big canoe with tow-lines of babiche, and the little motor chugged along with the whole outfit at a speed of five or six miles an hour.

For three days they forged steadily the length of Beverly, Aberdeen, and Schultz lakes, and the third night they camped midway between the western end of Baker Lake and the detachment. Noon of the fourth day found the canoes beached on the gravel in front of the little building that stands for law and order in the midst of a vast wilderness.

As Janier stepped from his canoe, the old Indian who had stood stolid and motionless beside Con-

stable Peters, strode forward and grasped his hand. Janier asked him a question in his own tongue, and receiving a reply, turned to Corporal Downey: "He says he'll tell me anything I want to know."

"All right, take him inside, an' hear what he's got to say. An' in the meantime, I'll get things strung out here. Might's well hold the investigation an' get it over with."

"Here, Jamieson, you an' Peters take charge of these two characters an' see that you keep 'em apart till they're wanted." He turned to the girl: "Miss Boyne, I'm about to hold an investigation into the—case of your father. Of course, you're welcome to be there, if you want to. But, I'd advise you not to. There's no necessity for it, an' you might hear things that would—would ——"

Irma nodded: "Thank you, Corporal, I understand. I'll have Teddy Bye and Bye set up my tent, and wait there till it's over."

Downey lifted his duffle from the canoe and walked to the building where the Indian was talking earnestly to Janier. Producing Nixon's gun from the folds of his extra shirt, the old Corporal cleared the table of a couple of well-thumbed magazines, and producing pen and ink

and paper, laid them beside the gun. Then he drew up a chair and seated himself behind the table. At length the Indian finished, and Janier turned to Downey: "Just as I told you, Boyne sent him on down to file the claim, while he stayed on to work his cross-cut in as far as he could before winter. As near as I can figure, he must have left Boyne's camp only a day or two before he was murdered. He don't know yet that Boyne is dead—thinks he's back there at camp, an' wants me to get you to give him back the packet so he can go on down to Churchill."

"Is he tellin' the truth?"

"Absolutely. He's a good Injun. I've known him for years."

"Tell him Boyne's dead."

The Indian greeted the announcement with a look of surprise and sorrow, so genuine that Downey was convinced.

"Ask him how he come to have Boyne's rifle."

"He says Boyne loaned it to him because he had no more ammunition for his own. He had to kill deer on the way."

Followed then a few minutes of silence while Downey wrote down the questions and answers. "All right. Tell him he can go outside now, but to stay around here. We may want to question

him later. Guess that disposes of his case. The next is the investigation into the case of Gus Janier, accused of the murder of John Boyne. Guess we'll call in Babcock first."

"Just a minute. I want to kind of set the stage, first. Or isn't it proper for the accused to take an active part in the investigation? As a matter of fact, Downey, I know who killed John Boyne."

"Sure, I know'd you did, all along. I've got a pretty good guess. An' before Babcock leaves this room, he'll know we know all about it. That damned Nixon was prob'ly an accomplice."

"Do you think Babcock killed Boyne?"

Downey stared at the man in amazement: "Do I *think* he did! Who in hell would kill him? Way back there on Bear Lake Miss Boyne told me she was afraid Babcock wasn't up here for no good. She told me about Boyne cleanin' up a million in the Klondike, an' how in case he died, Babcock would have the handlin' of it, an' how Babcock was supposed to be about at the end of his rope financially. Who would benefit by Boyne's death besides Babcock?"

"Anyone who killed him, provided he could get hold of Boyne's location. As a matter of fact, Downey, Babcock had no more to do with the murder of John Boyne than you had. He actually

believes I killed him! The truth is, Nixon killed Boyne—an' I'll prove it. He killed him for the location paper that Boyne carried suspended by a thong that passed around his neck."

Downey shook his head in resignation: "It's up to you, Gus. This is your show. It's a good many years now I be'n in the Service, an' I never seen a case just like it—where a man accused an' arrested fer murder has got to practically run the investigation. If I didn't know you like I do, I'd jest naturally arrest the whole kit an' caboodle of you an' pass the buck to the judge an' jury. But, go ahead an' give me a line on how you're goin' to prove this murder on Nixon."

"It's this way. Babcock's a common grafter, at least, that's the way I've got him sized up. Somehow, he managed to get Boyne's confidence, an' he persuaded Boyne to make his will and name him as executor before he started North. He tried to cinch his hold on Boyne's money by marrying Miss Boyne—but she saw through him. When a year passed without word from Boyne, Babcock started out to investigate. There is no question in my mind but what Babcock would rather have found Boyne dead than alive. Crowley had the same impression. Whether he would have actually killed Boyne or not, I don't know. Sometimes I

have thought he would, and again, I doubt that he has the nerve to have committed the actual crime. In his heart, though, he is as much a murderer as Nixon. Now, in order that neither one of them can say that the investigation was irregular in any way you take charge of it, examining both Babcock and Nixon with a view of bringing out the evidence against me. Call Babcock first—and when you get through questioning him, I'll ask you if I may question him, for the purpose, of course, of establishing my innocence. Then, call Nixon, and question him, and turn him over to me, and—we may even get a confession. By the way, you better order Babcock out of the room before Nixon talks—there may be things we would rather he didn't hear. Before we start, let's bring in the bodies of Boyne and Crowley. We can lay them here on the floor."

Stepping to the door Downey gave the required order, which Jamieson and Teddy Bye and Bye carried out.

"We'll want Crowley's coat. His wallet and note-book are in the pocket. He didn't have it on when he was drowned. And his duffle-bag. We want that blood-stained hammer too."

When Jamieson returned with the things, Downey removed the note-book, wallet, and ham-

mer and placed them upon the table beside Nixon's gun. "What else?" he asked.

"Let's see—oh, yes, better lay Babcock's gun up there. It's on Crowley's belt. An' a common teaspoon, too, Downey."

"What?"

"Just an ordinary teaspoon."

"Guess you know what you're doin', but this here table looks like the counter of a hardware store."

"Now, if you'll let me take that packet you took off Nenikna's neck, we'll be all set."

Downey passed over the little oilcloth packet, and to the officer's surprise, Janier opened his shirt, slipped the thong over his head, and dropping the packet into place, buttoned his shirt.

Stepping to the door, Downey ordered Peters to bring Babcock, who entered, picking his way gingerly past the bodies that took up a goodly share of the floor-space of the little room. The table had been pushed as far as possible to the rear, and Babcock seated himself in a chair indicated by Downey. Janier occupied another chair rather nearer the table.

"What's your name?" asked Downey.

"Warren Babcock."

"Residence?"

"New York City."

"Age?"

"Forty-nine."

"Occupation?"

"Promoter," answered the man, after an instant's hesitation.

"All right, Mr. Babcock. You're called in here as a witness in this inquiry to find out if there's sufficient evidence fer holdin' the prisoner, Gus Janier, fer the murder of one, John Boyne. We're a long ways from the courts, here, Mr. Babcock, an' we've got to be pretty sure we've got a case before we go to the expense of transportin' prisoners, an' witnesses. So we're supposed to go into the facts pretty careful."

"He was caught red-handed by one of your own officers," snapped Babcock, with a return of his habitual arrogance, which for the past three or four days had given place to surly ill-humor.

"Was you present an' seen that arrest? Or, is that only hearsay."

"Constable Crowley detailed the particulars to both myself and Nixon."

"We've got Constable Crowley's notes fer the arrest," reminded Downey, picking up the notebook and laying it down again. "What we want out of you is first-hand information."

"Well," replied Babcock, sarcastically, "I didn't see the murderer sneak up behind Boyne and hit him with the hammer. If I had been that near, there would never have been any murder committed. And, right here, I want to register a protest against the treatment accorded the murderer. Instead of a prisoner under arrest for a brutal and cowardly murder, he has been treated more like a friend, or a guest, ever since you took over command of the outfit. And, you may be sure I shall report the matter to the proper authorities."

"Your protest don't amount to nothin', bein' as it's got to be made to me as officer in charge of detachment. As fer reportin' it, go as fer as you like. But, jest suppose you let me do a little questionin': Do you know this prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Where an' when did you first meet him?"

"On Fish River at the mouth of the Icy. I can't tell you the date, because I've been in this God-forsaken country so long I've lost all track of the calendar."

"Maybe Crowley's note-book will help us," said Downey, slowly turning the pages. "Here's an item that ought to fix the date. August the 15th. 'Returned up river afoot an' found Babcock

at mouth of Icy. He told me Janier had abducted Boyne's girl an' hit up river. I borrowed an outfit from Babcock, an' struck out overland in search of Janier. Will also hunt fer Boyne's camp which I figure is somewheres in the ridges north of Clinton Colden.' Now, how many days before Crowley's visit had you met Janier at the mouth of the Icy?"

"Well, Janier and Nixon started out the day we got there, and the next day Janier came back and after assaulting me, forced Miss Boyne to accompany him up river, and the day following that, Crowley appeared."

"That would make it the 13th. Now, Mr. Babcock, suppose you go ahead an' state any incriminatin' evidence you might know agin' the prisoner—any facts that would help to fasten the murder onto him."

"Well, almost the first thing Janier asked me, when he found out I was a friend of Boyne's, was as to whether or not Boyne was wealthy. My reply that he was worth something over a million seemed to please him mightily. Then he and Nixon decided Boyne was in the Heywoods and agreed upon a plan for finding him. Janier told me he had promised Miss Boyne to help her find her father. They started out leaving me in camp,

and next day Janier returned a short time after Miss Boyne and her guide had arrived by way of the Icy. Janier then ordered Miss Boyne to accompany him up Fish River—away from the mountains, saying that he did not believe Boyne to be in the hills. When I, as Miss Boyne's guardian, forbade her to accompany Janier, he assaulted me, disarmed me, and took the girl off up the river. The next day Crowley appeared after his accident, and I filed charges of abduction against Janier, and after borrowing an outfit from me, he started out to arrest Janier, and also to locate Boyne if possible. He told me, in case Nixon should appear, for us to proceed up river and meet him on Sussex Lake, or Clinton Colden. Three days later Nixon did appear, and when I told him that Janier had gone up river with Miss Boyne he seemed much agitated, and expressed fears for Boyne's safety, stating that he had seen a look leap into Janier's eyes when I told him about Boyne's wealth, that led him to believe Janier meant to obtain that wealth at any hazard. We immediately proceeded up river and the next day found Crowley camped on the east end of Sussex Lake with Janier under arrest for the murder of Boyne. We proceeded from there to Boyne's camp where Nixon succeeded in finding

the hammer with which Janier killed Boyne. Then we brought the body with us and were proceeding to this point—when you met us. Miss Boyne and her guide were also in the camp on Sussex Lake, and the girl professed to believe in Janier's innocence. In my opinion, either she is implicated in the plot, or Janier has exerted some strange hypnotic spell over her. You have doubtless noted that her attitude toward Janier ever since has certainly not been the attitude that any normal girl would take toward her father's murderer."

"That's so," admitted Downey. "Is that all?"

"All except what Crowley told Nixon and myself. That he caught Janier in Boyne's camp and that he took a certain paper of Boyne's from him when he searched him after arrest——"

"Never mind what Crowley told you. Anything more?"

"Nothing, except that on Sussex Lake he threatened to kill me, and did make a murderous assault upon me, the results of which you can readily see. If ever there was a clear case of murder——"

"That will do. I don't want no more opinions. I guess that's all."

"Corporal, may I ask the witness a few questions?"

"Go ahead, if they've got any direct bearin' on the case. This here inquiry is for to get holt of all the facts possible—but, bein' as you're a prisoner, I must warn you anything you say can be used agin' you."

"Babcock, you told me upon two different occasions that you were named as executor in Boyne's will, that in case of Boyne's death you were to have the handling of his property until Miss Boyne reached the age of thirty, and that the annual income you were to pay Miss Boyne until that time was purely optional with you?"

"Yes, I did. And I've got the will here to prove it."

"Now, Babcock, you are the owner of this gun?" Janier picked up the heavy revolver Downey had taken from Crowley's belt.

"You ought to know. You took it away from me and threw it in the river. It took me fifteen minutes to find it, and load it. And if I could have got hold of it five minutes sooner, you would never have killed John Boyne!"

"You had this gun in your possession all the time until Crowley took it away from you on Sussex Lake?"

"Of course I did. What's all this got to do ——"

"Just a minute. You said a moment ago that three days elapsed between the departure of Crowley from your camp at the mouth of the Icy, to the arrival of Nixon?"

"Yes—three days."

"That's all, I think." Janier turned to Downey: "As a matter of fact, Corporal, it was I who found Boyne's body. Naturally I examined the wound very carefully. I do not agree with Crowley's deduction that the weapon used was a hammer."

"But, Nixon found the blood-stained hammer!" interrupted Babcock, "It's right there on the table. The idea is preposterous! Of course it was a hammer!"

"Nevertheless it was not," replied Janier, "And, with the Corporal's permission, I shall uncover the wound in Boyne's head, and demonstrate that the wound could not possibly have been inflicted with a hammer."

Downey nodded: "Go ahead. It's the facts we want."

With his knife Janier cut away the tarpaulin exposing the wound: "Now, Corporal, if you will bring that hammer over here you will see that at

no possible angle can the hammer-head be made to fit the wound."

Hammer in hand, Downey stooped over the body, and with Babcock and Janier bending close to watch his movements, endeavored to fit the weapon to the wound. After several minutes of patient turning and twisting the hammer into every conceivable position, he gave it up. "It don't fit," he observed, with finality. "There ain't no way he could of be'n hit that would make that hole with this hammer."

Babcock continued to stare incredulously: "But —it must have been the hammer——"

"On the contrary, Babcock," interrupted Janier, "The weapon that made that wound was the butt of a heavy revolver!" He turned to Downey: "Just bring Babcock's gun over here, Corporal, and we'll see whether or not it fits."

Babcock seemed suddenly to have frozen in his chair. At the words his face had gone deadly white, and in fascinated horror he watched the officer fit the butt of his gun upon the wound. It fitted to a nicety. For many tense seconds Babcock stared wide-eyed, his hands clutching his knees until it seemed the fingers were gouging the very flesh. His face was bloodless. His jaw moved, but no words came. Then, the voice of

Janier fell upon his ears, and the sense of Janier's words penetrated his numbed brain: "To sum up, briefly, Corporal: Babcock admitted that three days elapsed between the departure of Crowley, and the arrival of Nixon. He was alone during those three days. He had this gun in his possession all that time. And—the gun-butt fits the wound. I may add that the distance from his camp at the mouth of the Icy to Boyne's camp does not exceed twenty miles, overland. And that Babcock would undoubtedly profit mightily in the handling of Boyne's estate——"

The words were interrupted by a cry from Babcock, so shrill it sounded almost a scream: "Christ! I never did it!" The man was leaning far forward in his chair, his eyes staring like the eyes of a maniac: "I didn't kill him! Damn you! I didn't! I didn't!"

"Hold on, now," cautioned Downey, "Better take it easy. If you didn't do it, you'll get a chanct to tell it to the jury——"

"But—God, man! The evidence! It's enough to convict a man before any jury in the world! And I'm innocent, I tell you!"

"Pretty strong case," admitted Downey. "I guess I'll jest have to change the charge agin' you from 'interferin' with an officer' to murder."

"But, I didn't do it, I tell you! You'll send an innocent man to the gallows!"

"Crowley told me that he had got the impression that Babcock would rather find Boyne dead than alive," observed Janier.

"It's a lie! I didn't kill him! You killed him yourself, and you've framed me. I never can prove my innocence in the face of those damning facts!"

Downey stepped to the door and called Peters: "Take him along, Constable, an' watch him. Charge agin' him is changed to murder."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE INVESTIGATION—NIXON

When they were alone in the room for a moment, prior to the summoning of Nixon, Downey regarded Janier gravely: "Look here, son, you've showed up an awful strong case agin' him fer an innocent man. Jest don't make no mistakes. If he's guilty we don't want to hang this here murder onto Nixon, much as he needs hangin'. But, on the other hand, if Nixon's guilty an' yer case falls down agin' him—it leaves Babcock in a hell of a fix. It's jest like he says, any jury in the world would convict him on the evidence."

Janier grinned: "You don't have to submit it, if you don't want to. There is nothing in these proceedings that have to go on record. If we don't get Nixon, we can turn Babcock loose, anyhow. I wouldn't stand for having him face those facts on trial. I know he didn't kill Boyne."

Downey lighted his pipe and blew a cloud of smoke against the low ceiling: "If you've got a

stronger case agin' Nixon, I want to hear it—that's all. Here he comes, now."

Jamieson closed the door leaving Nixon standing just inside, staring in horror upon the gaping hole in Boyne's head. It was with a visible effort the man pulled himself together and made his way to the chair into which he dropped with eyes closed as though to shut out the sight.

"Name, Amos Nixon," said Downey, writing it down.

"Residence?"

"The Pas."

"Humph," grunted Downey, and noted the answer.

"Age?"

"Somewheres around fifty. I hain't sure."

"Occupation?"

"Trapper."

"Sometimes, maybe. We'll let it go at that, though. Now, Nixon, do you know anything that would go to prove that Janier killed Boyne?"

Nixon glanced shiftily from Downey to Janier, then leered, knowingly, into the officer's face: "Say, Downey, what'n hell you tryin' to pull, here, anyhow? Don't you s'pose I know you got it all proved on Babcock? Peters, he damn' near had to carry him out of here—an' I heered him pass

the word to Jamieson. What youse tryin' to do, git me in bad? Hell, I know'd all the time it was Babcock done it. Crowley thought it was Janier, so I shet up about what I know'd till the time come to tell it."

"How do you know it?"

"I know damn' well he did. I know'd all the time, jest hearin' him talk that he'd ruther find Boyne dead than alive—so did Crowley. Then he hed all kinds of time to slip over here an' rap Boyne on the head, after Crowley started after Janier, an' before I got back from the Heywoods. That's when he done it. Crowley he sends me to hunt fer the hammer Boyne was kilt with, an' I looks around, an' seen how the feller that done it stood back of a rock where Boyne hed to pass him, an' when Boyne got a little ways past he raps him an', chances is, thinks I, he throw'd away the hammer, so I hunts around in the bresh an' finds it—didn't I, Janier?"

Janier nodded, and Nixon continued: "An' back of the rock right where the feller stood, I seen Babcock's tracks. He wears boots, an' everyone else wore moccasins. Then, besides, when me an' Babcock was camped that night before we come onto Crowley an' the rest of 'em on Sussex Lake, Babcock he talked in his sleep. I guess it was

botherin' him—er mebbe he was scairt, but he mumbles an' mutters a while, an' then he says, kind of mumblin', but plain enough so's I could hear, he says, 'take that,' an' then he says, 'Oh, by God, I killed him,' or else, 'Oh, my God, I killed him,' I couldn't onderstand jest which, an' then he mumbles about havin' Boyne's money, an' his location, an' to hell with the gal, an' a lot more that I couldn't ketch. An' then he went to sleep."

Corporal Downey eyed the man gravely: "An' you'd be willin' to swear to that on a witness stand, Nixon? When you knew your testimony might send a man to the gallows."

"Sure I would. Why'n hell wouldn't I? I'd hate to see an innercint man git hung fer killin' a man he never kilt, wouldn't I? An' now look a-here, Downey. If I go down an' swear to what I've tol' youse, it'll cinch yer case agin' Babcock, won't it?"

Downey nodded: "Yes, there ain't no question, but that would cinch it."

"Well, then, turn about's fair play, as the feller says. How about droppin' that liquor charge agin' me?"

Downey hesitated a moment, as his glance sought the face of Janier who nodded: "I guess

you can drop that charge against Nixon, Corporal. I'll never say a word."

"All right, Nixon. I won't make no charge agin' you fer that liquor. I guess that's about all."

"I call that square enough, Downey. You kin depend on me. I'll give 'em an earful at the trial. Babcock's as good as hung right now, an' you'll git the credit fer a good piece of work."

"By the way, Nixon," said Janier. "You know, this inquiry was held for the purpose of establishing my guilt, so I'm a little bit interested. You say you believe Babcock killed Boyne with a hammer?"

"Sure he did! Didn't I find the hammer, myself? You seen it! An' you seen right where I found it. You an' me an' Crowley paced it off."

"Yes, I remember. But, Nixon—as a matter of fact, Boyne wasn't killed with a hammer."

"The hell he wasn't!" exclaimed Nixon, his eyes narrowing. "Look a-here, Janier. You want to hang this here murder onto Babcock, because Babcock done it, don't you? Sure. Well, then you better let well enough alone. We got a strong enough case agin' him. If Boyne wasn't kilt with a hammer, then the way he was kilt was by fallin' down in one of them fits of his'n an' hittin' his head on a rock."

"But, how about Babcock's mutterin' that night?" asked Downey.

"There y'are," answered Nixon, "That proves Babcock did kill him—jest as I said."

Janier raised Nixon's gun from the table, and holding it in his hand, regarded it casually: "Did you have this gun with you when you went on that trip to the Heywoods hunting for Boyne?" he asked.

"'Course I did! Say, Janier, what the hell you allus askin' me about that there gun fer? I told you onct it was my gun, an' that it hain't never be'n off'n me fer ten year. Give it here! I've packed it so long, I don't feel jest right without I've got it on."

Janier pointed the gun at the clock on its shelf, as if trying its balance, then reversing it he grasped it by the barrel and struck at an imaginary object: "It's a heavy gun, Nixon. A man could strike a hard blow with a gun like that, couldn't he? He could—crush a man's skull."

"What the hell you talkin' about?" cried Nixon, his faded eyes flickering.

"Just this," answered Janier, "John Boyne was killed by a blow from the butt of a gun—a heavy gun, Nixon. A gun as heavy as this." He stooped and fitting the butt to the wound, looked

the hooch-trader squarely in the eye. "*You killed John Boyne*, Nixon—and you killed him with this gun!"

For an instant Nixon glared at the kneeling man, then as though crouching to spring upon him, his voice rose in a snarl: "It's a damn' lie! What'n hell you tryin' to pull? I wasn't nowheres near Boyne! I was up in the hills! Any gun butt would fit that hole! Try Babcock's there! By God, try Downey's! You can't prove nothin' on me!"

"Oh, yes I can. Just toss me that spoon, Downey."

Carefully Janier inserted the spoon under the edge of the skull, pressing down the crushed bone with his fingers, then very carefully he withdrew it and with a forefinger explored its content of clotted blood and brain tissue. From the mass he drew forth a tiny object, from which he carefully cleaned the blood. It was a small sliver of walnut. Stepping to the table, he held the gun and the sliver before Downey's eyes, and very carefully he fitted the sliver into its place in the corner of the left hand butt-plate of Nixon's gun. Downey stared, and Janier explained:

"I found this sliver sticking in the wound the evening I found Boyne's body, and I pushed it

under the skull for safe keeping. You will remember, that back on Beverly Lake, I called your attention to the chipped corner of this gun butt?"

Downey nodded. "Yes, I remember."

"And you remember that Nixon has made it very plain, that at no time has this gun ever been out of his possession."

Again Downey nodded, and glanced contemptuously at Nixon, who had collapsed, and lay sniveling in his chair. "You'd swear a man to the gallows to save your own dirty hide! You're the low-livedest specimen I've saw in forty years of policin'. You ain't fit to dirty a new rope with! They'd ought to hang you with balin' wire."

"It wasn't me," moaned Nixon, "It wasn't me! I done it—but it was Crowley planned it. We was pardners. He was goin' to file the claim. He put me up to it. He said how they wasn't no chanct to git ketched, with him in the Service."

"You lie, damn you!" cried Downey, his face flushing at the slur cast upon a member of the force that for forty years he had loved and reverenced. "You're worse than the lowest-down dog that ever lived! When you can't git away with layin' yer crime on a live man, you try to lay it on a dead one!"

"It hain't a lie! I kin prove it! The claim's

staked in Crowley's name! An' Crowley's got the location paper on him! I was afraid to carry it! He was goin' to file when his time was up—next month. It's around his neck now. By God, open his shirt an' look! An' go back there an' look at the location notice on the stake. It's in Crowley's name—he put me up to it!"

Downey sat as one stricken. There was the ring of truth in the words, and Nixon's hand pointed shakily toward the breast of the dead Crowley's shirt. "They can't hang me! They kin give me life—but they can't hang me!"

The old Corporal continued to stare in horror at the man who had risen unsteadily to his feet, and whose words poured from his lips in a torrent of terror. He was thinking that his hands must open that shirt—must fasten a cowardly crime upon the name of a brother officer in the Service. Half-consciously he was aware of a movement from Janier. Dully, his eyes shifted to the younger man across the table. Janier was unbuttoning his shirt, and very deliberately he was removing a small packet in oilcloth, which dangled from a thong. Nixon, too, was watching. His words broke short in the middle of a sentence, and his eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets. Suddenly, with a maniacal yell Nixon seemed to spring

into life: "You've got it off him! Damn you! They'll hang me—now! I'll——" Like a flash the man sprang forward and caught his own gun from the table top. The next instant it was leveled at Janier's head. A loud explosion roared in the little room. Nixon straightened backward, spun half way around, and crashed to the floor across the bodies of Boyne and Crowley. Janier glanced at Corporal Downey, whose fingers were just unclosing from the butt of Babcock's revolver. The officer had fired without raising the gun from the table-top!

The next instant the door burst open, and Jamieson and Peters crowded into the room, closely followed by Irma Boyne. After one glance the two constables withdrew. Janier met the girl at the door, and for a moment she sobbed out her relief upon his breast: "There, there, darling. It is all over, now. The man who killed your father is—dead."

"But—but—I thought it was—Babcock!" cried the girl, staring in horror upon Nixon's upturned face.

"No, Nixon was the man. But, go back to your tent, dear. I will join you in a few minutes." And hastily kissing her, he thrust her gently outside.

A moment later Jamieson reappeared: "Cor-

poral, I have to report, sir, that the prisoner has escaped."

"Escaped? What prisoner?"

"Why, Babcock, sir! We both ran in here at the sound of the shot—an' when we stepped out again, he was gone."

"Oh—him," answered Downey, absently. "Well, let him go. Or, go after him, whichever you like."

For just an instant, Jamieson stared as though he had not heard aright, then, saluting, he stepped out and closed the door.

Inside the little room, the clock ticked incessantly, as Downey wrote scratchily with a pen. The scratchings ceased, and Janier glanced across at the older man who sat staring out the window, as he gnawed at the end of the penholder.

"What you writin'?" he asked.

"Report." A moment of silence, and then: "Say, Gus, boy, do you think he was tellin' the truth—about—about—Crowley?"

"Have you reported Crowley's death?"

"Yes—just wrote it."

"How does it read?"

"Drowned, in performance of duty."

"Corporal Downey," answered Janier, "suppose you just leave it that way—an' we'll bury him *with his shirt on*."

CHAPTER XXV

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

NEXT morning Gus Janier, and Irma Boyne, and Teddy Bye and Bye, stood on the beach beside their loaded canoe, and bid good-bye to Corporal Downey, of the Mounted.

On a knoll behind the detachment the mounded gravel of three newly made graves caught the sun.

Tears filled the girl's eyes as they rested for a moment upon one grave a little apart from the rest. She turned away for a moment and when she again faced the others, her eyes were dry.

"There's one thing that makes me *mad*," she said, "And that is to think of that horrible Babcock's having the handling of all Dad's money—my money, by rights."

Janier smiled, and drew from his pocket the folded slip of paper that Crowley had taken from the band of his hat, and which only the day before he had extracted from the dead Constable's wallet.

"Here, dear, is something that may interest

you. I found it among your father's papers which Nixon had scattered about the tent."

It was a telegram. The girl read:

"John Boyne, New York City, March 13th–19—
Gold Bond Dredge completely wiped out. Stockholders lose one hundred cents on the dollar."

And below was a penciled notation: "Every cent I owned was in G. B. D. I've got to make a strike."

"Why, he received this before he came north!" she cried. "And you have known it all along," her eyes were upon Janier's face.

"Yes, ever since I found your father's camp."

"Oh, I'm glad—glad!" she cried.

"Glad that unless your father's strike pans out you will be penniless? Or glad that Babcock will not have the handling of the money?"

"No! No! Glad—that you *knew* I was penniless!" And, Janier laughed happily as he helped her into the canoe.

"Good-bye, Downey—old man. See you—when I see you! And, by the way," he held the telegram out to the officer, "You might hand this to Babcock, if the boys ever find him. Tell him it's a wedding present from Miss Boyne and my-

self—we get the wedding—and he gets the present."

"Don't ferget to deliver that report at Port Nelson, son," cautioned the old Corporal, as Janier pushed off, "An' good luck to you—both!"

It was not until the canoe had disappeared from view around a distant point of the lake, that Corporal Downey turned and entered the door of the detachment.

THE END.